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# PROLOGUE 02 - the Jealous Queen

I was very beautiful once, more beautiful than anything else on this world. I was more beautiful than the sun, than precious stones, more beautiful than all the beauties that were ever known to humanity.

Everyone should have acknowledged this fact.

Everyone should have raised their arms in jubilation and praise me.

The entire world should have striven to preserve my beauty for eternity.

However -

These idiots never understood this!

I was at the pinnacle of happiness three years ago.

"And here comes the genius magician - Mon Lambo!"

The audience, a full house, cheered for me. The stagelights gathered and shone on me. The music was solemn, and the sounds of clapping did not fade for a long time. How many others in world could enjoy the same amount of attention as me, and hear their own names being called back to them by the audience with a mad passion?

Mon. Mon. The genius magician, Mon Lambo.

Everyone should have respected this name. Historians should have included my name into the list of past heroes without a doubt. Everyone should have called me a genius, and loudly proclaimed me as a miracle while tears rolled off their faces. That was expected. I was different from those mortals. Everyone living in the same era as me should have given thanks to the blessing of God.

I was very satisfied. I became very arrogant, and I considered myself as a human chosen by God. Everyone else was merely a lowborn human who had been created to compliment my existence. I was a firm believer of this.

Until I was betrayed by those lowborn humans.

The one who betrayed me was a vile woman in the same theater company as me.

I was born in a filthy ghetto that I don't even want to remember the name of, and I passed my childhood there. Someone died every day, the air was murky, and we never had enough to eat. Family and friends would stab each other in the back for just one coin. It was a rotten town.

I crawled out of that place, and then began to wander and perform on the streets. I gave up everything, and strove to keep practicing my craft underground. While all the other people were still sleeping in their warm beds, I practiced my magic alone underneath the cold night sky.

Men are not born as geniuses. One becomes a genius during his lifetime. Those who do not become geniuses only fall short because they are lazy, and do not experience the maddening resolve to hone their craft even if it kills them. They are but mundane creatures who waste their precious lives in foolishness and confusion.

I sat silently on the side of the road and looked at the children my age as I kept considering this. I was genuinely a little bit jealous. Those children didn't experience any hardships, and yet they were undoubtedly happier than I was. I, who tried everything I could to make a living for myself. I would not tolerate this.

Now I remember this. I was looking down upon those foolish people from my height. I will let you, those of you who consider happiness as your natural due and does not work hard, recognize just how much of a failure your lives have all been.

I am the one worthy of happiness!

I have more patience than anyone else! I worked harder than anyone else! I craved happiness more than anyone else!

You fools, you who are living a life like lukewarm water, who blindly believe that someone will spoon-feed you happiness if you wish for it, I will show you what I am capable of! I will become someone great, someone beautiful, someone outstanding, and then I will show you what I am capable of!

This self-depreciation, overflowing with jealousy, became my drive, and I used it to keep climbing towards the top of the world.

I thought that, after my performance on the street was reported, the TV station should then appear and invited me to a program. Of course, I was a genius, after all. The entire world should have acknowledged my existence. That was inevitable. After all, I was the chosen one! I would of course become happy. I was different from all those mediocre creatures. I was someone living seriously and striving to be better!

In the blink of an eye, I became someone famous. Everyone was praising me. However, those remarks around me did not satisfy my pride, not at all.

They should praise me more! More! More and more people should see me. More and more people should envy me. I want those people who are greedily enjoying their peaceful lives to feel regret and shame about themselves!! Ahahaha! I am completely different from all of you! I don't care how you debase me. That's just the wailing of losers! Go grit your teeth in hatred as you gaze upon me with jealousy! You mediocre humans! You ordinary creatures!

All you have to do is to be jealous of me! All I have to do is to feel regret for your foolishness! That would be supreme happiness for me! I would laugh so hard I can't even close my mouth! Ahahaha! Hahaha! Think of why you can't be as happy as Mon Lambo! Mutter to yourself! Feel free to feel jealous and frustrated until you go mad!

Envy me in your wails! Envy me in your desperation! This pain, this regret that could almost cut your body up piece by piece, will be used to cure my sorrows!

You idiots! Feel jealous! Ahahaha! Ahahahahahaha!

I would feel annoyed even if I pronounce that name, so I shall call her 'that woman'. That woman didn't try anything herself, but just became a performer through her family. People like those are the people I hate the most. She never perfected her performing skills, and simply chattered about her thoughts. She flirted as if she was trying attract people around her all the time. It disgusted me. She would escape to safety as soon as she ran into trouble, and always asked for help from others. She never considered ways to solve problems whenever she had issues, and always ran away.

But although she was so despicable, she was very smooth when it came to dealing with other people. Everyone loved her.

On the contrary, I didn't want to interact with other fools, and I was isolated.

Compared to practicing their skills and performing on a bigger and grander stage, women like her put more thought into staying in their current place, where they could just live with ease. And I, this genius magician that that was a supreme gem of humanity, was someone that made the atmosphere more ominous, someone who was a bother.

This ostentatious and despicable situation continued in the theater company. That woman made up rumors, saying that men in the company were commanded to woo me. It was so stupid. She could not win over me in our craft, so she started to hurt me with rumors, wishing to defeat me through alienation and other roundabout methods. It was ridiculous.

I completely ignored her existence, and worked diligently like always.

In the end, that woman was completely confused, while my prestige kept rising. The atmosphere was so good. It felt so happy to look down upon the fools from my height. Yet that woman kept looking towards me with her jealous, slavishly hateful gaze! Woman, why do you hate me? The only reason others did not acknowledge you was because you did not try hard enough!

Things would often get very fun after the performance ended. I enjoyed the audience’s cheers and clapping on my own. However, she made many mistakes during the performance, even with moves that could be easily mastered with the

slightest practice, and she was mocked. I swore that, unlike her, I would not harm others and cause others to be despised. My personality also wasn't inclined to spread such baseless rumors. If I had the spare time to knife someone in the back, I would rather perfect my skills, and improve myself.

However, on that day, I reached the limit of my endurance.

I faced her, faced that woman who frequently made me feel inadequate and whom I disliked, and spoke what I thought to her face:

"Do you know why you are not receiving praise like me?"

I looked down, a rising desire for sadism welling up in my heart as I gritted my teeth and hissed:

"Because you are not *me*!"

Then, in order to make even an idiot like her understand this, I began to explain in a tender and simple way:

"I am someone chosen by God, whereas you are but some worthless trash. Even the audience knows this. You didn't try as hard as I did, but you were so sure of yourself, as if you got the same praises as me. If you have the time to despise me, you should go practice those moves that even a newbie can muster."

And as soon as I finished speaking -

She emitted a mad cry, and threw the flask of sulfuric acid she had hidden in her dress towards my face. The sound of the audience cheering was still echoing behind me. However, I could only hear my own shocked screams, and the terrified yells that came as my skin was scorched away.

Even so, I still believed that this world was fair.

God must exist somewhere, and strictly looking over the matter of retribution in His abode. If I strove for it, if I had strived for it, then happiness must be arranged for me. If I kept working to improve myself, then I would definitely

achieve the appropriate result.

The world is fair. I will definitely be happy. I have always worked hard since the day I was born, and never slacked, always holding on to the thought that I will one day become happy.

However... However!

Using the money I saved up, I spent three years trying to restore my face to its previous form using plastic surgery, my terrifying face, *ruined* by sulfuric acid. Yes. As long as I didn't give up, I could recover as many times as I needed, from whatever came my way. I was able to work hard and leave that terrifying and rotten ghetto, arriving at where I am today. What are these scars on my face to me? I believe I will once again be welcomed by the audience. I have no doubt of that.

The genius magician, Mon Lambo, is here!

The packed house was full of cheers. The stagelights focused all on me. Solemn music, and the reverberating sound of clapping. I believed from the bottom of my heart that those scenes would once again appear.

That's because I am the person chosen by God! Therefore, I've only suffered a small setback, and just needed to rest for a little bit. No one can replace a genius like me. Once I re-emerge, the audience would once again bestow their cheers and praise on me.

But my hopes were crushed.

They were completely shattered, and I fell into the worst situation possible.

The first time I felt a hint of what was to come was when I was introducing my magic performance at a TV station.

I was actually chased out of there. It was unbelievable. I still clearly remember the words they said:

You are done. Your magic has fallen behind the times. Your performance is just entertainment to the audience, like a TV program or a video game. Your tricks will soon be forgotten as soon as other fun products come up.

There are many things that can replace you.

Huh? I was shocked. It was unbelievable. Wasn't I a genius? There was nothing that could replace me. Hey, how many people had the same talents as me? How many others had worked as hard as me in practicing my magic?

And while I was feeling such unease, that woman was living comfortably before me. She was the one who burnt my face – but thanks to those eloquent and versatile lawyers of hers, the unforgivable sin that she committed was completely erased. Yet she appeared before me at this time. That bitch looked down upon me and shrieked in laughter as if she saw something extremely ridiculous. Her face was full of a disgust as she spoke:

“Do you understand now? You are not a genius. You are nothing!”

*Split split split*. The stiches on my face from the cosmetic surgery started to split apart. I could feel that the rotting flesh was already exposed.

“There are many, many things that can replace you. You are not a genius, and there is nothing special about you. No one treated you as someone chosen by God. You are just an average actor. You are just a frivolous thing to be consumed by the public, just like any other entertainment! Ahahaha!”

You mediocre people.

You mundane creatures!

This is so foolish. Isn’t there a God in this world? What is happening? Why, why do people who strive do not get recognition from others? Why is someone so brutish, foolish, and base, able to wear such a self-satisfied expression, while a genius like me had to fall into such a state?

Everything was upside down!

I want to be special! I want to be a genius, to be someone chosen by God, someone praised by all! I don’t want to be completely forgotten by people so quickly! I don’t want to be a cog in this capitalist machine! This is scary! So scary so scary so scary! It’s so scary to be completely forgotten by people! No matter how much I tried, no matter how much I strove, I would lose the recognition of others with just the smallest mistake. It’s so scary!

The structure of this world must be all wrong.

It should be fair! God! The world should be fair! I should be praised and complimented! God! Please realize this and come to your senses!

Everything has gone crazy! The logic in this world is all weird! It must be all messed up! If I can't even become happy, then this world is definitely messed up!

"Ahhhhhh! If you understand this, then hurry up and disappear! You has-been!"

Listening to those words she said, my sense of reason completely crumbled.

Who did that bitch think she was?!

You unbearably mundane creature, who the hell do you think you are?!

Had I been someone ordinary, then I should have been finished. It would have been a tragic story of failure that happened all around us, a story full of anger and sorrow. But it wasn't over yet, no matter if it ends in happiness or misfortune - no, it would definitely end in happiness.

One of the wandering Fragments of God discovered me, and a soul governed by hatred took root in the fertile soil.

Ultimate Shield

I only knew about the name The Weakest later. *Do what thou wilt* - that was what the Fragment said to me.

When I came to my senses, that woman's body laid lifeless before me, and I stood before it, covered with blood.

That was probably the start of everything, the start of this world's journey towards the end.

I will treat everything fairly. I will rebuild this world into a just one.

The Snow White born with her beauty finally obtained happiness at the end - that shouldn't be right. It is only fitting that the Jealous Queen should obtain the final victory in this world. That person who kept striving for happiness, who never slacked even for a moment, that Jealous Queen.

# EPILOGUE 03: The Mirror of Truth

Saibara Mitsuki's death occurred at thirty-two minutes past midnight.

Saibara Mitsuki's memories of the days when she was still human were very vague.

A long, long time ago, a huge Fragment of God, one of the many broken and scattered Fragments, entered Mitsuki's body. Due to the properties of the Fragment named Unpleasant Counter-Current, Mitsuki's personality could not accept its existence and completely shattered. Angel or fallen angel, the personification of retribution or destruction; neither of which were the true Mitsuki, but they were both indeed somewhat related to Mitsuki.

Mitsuki seemed to be a girl whom others disliked.

Her elder sis hid the diary Mitsuki wrote in back in those days. Now that Mitsuki was reading it, she felt as if she was reading something written by someone else. She was really a very, very normal girl. However, no one reached out to help her because of that. Therefore, she armed herself with malignance and pride. She was a very fragile girl.

Her only companion was her sister. As a human, Mitsuki only managed to live because of her sister.

It was understandable that she felt empty and lonely, as she pitied herself as if she was taking pity on someone else.

Therefore, she wanted to be good friends with someone. Even if she failed this time, even if she felt scared when coming into contact with other people, she still wanted to be friends with someone, to be a good friend -

She wanted to save Saibara Mitsuki's soul. Even if she was a despicable girl who no one wanted to even look at, it wouldn't be a bad thing to save her.

Her 'duty' was to be an angel. As she was an angel, maybe then she should save her.

"... Did I..."

Sinking into numbness, Mitsuki moaned as if she was talking in her sleep.

"Become... an angel, big sis...?"

The girl looked strange wearing her hat with round ears, a cute curly tail decoration, and thick gloves. Still, no matter how one looked at her, she was a very shy, indecisive, and happy little girl.

She looked magnificent, as innocent as an angel – except that Mitsuki was covered with blood.

A tragic scene stretched out all around her. For some reason, the large majority of the Kannonsakazaki High School had been tragically destroyed - broken chunks of tile and debris were scattered all around Mitsuki.

In this dark, late night, the moon shone upon the massive remains of the concrete ruin, casting huge shadows onto the ground. Mitsuki struggled with difficulty on the icy cold ground, with part of her body crushed by the debris.

"Urk..."

Mitsuki stared at the slab of stone pressing down on her, her eyes wide. Huffing and puffing, she tried her hardest to push it away, but it was too heavy. She couldn't feel the right side of her stomach anymore. It was probably completely crushed. It was the same for her right foot.

It would be a long time before she would be able to move.

Oh no, how terrible. Although she was an immortal and couldn't feel pain, it would still be terrible to be immobile for a long time. Her clothes were also all messed up. So unlucky. However, thoughts of rage and frustration did not stay for a long time in Mitsuki's mind, disappearing like a puff of fog before the sun.

"Aaaaaaaauuum."

Putting her entire strength behind the hand that was grasping the slab of stone, the girl suddenly erupted with power.

"Chirp - ★"

With a deafening noise, the slab flew far away from her – unbelievably far. Mitsuki put on a very satisfied expression and made a victory pose, smiling with satisfaction that she had everything sorted.

"You're going to panic when you hear me, and smile when you see me~ There's so much strength in my little body ★ I am the undefeatable Unpleasant Counter-Current~★"

With a whoosh, Mitsuki propped up her blood-covered body, then sighed and lowered her head.

"... Umm, it's so boring to talk loudly by myself. Um, what is going on?"

Mitsuki took off her beloved hat and patted away the dust on it, then plunked it back onto her head as she surveyed her surroundings. It was a scene of utter devastation, appropriate for a battlefield. Had the fight already finished? It was quiet, too quiet, so ominously quiet that it actually made her feel uneasy. Feeling that her body was shivering, Mitsuki hugged herself and stood up slowly -

"- Whaa?"

Suddenly, she lost her balance and fell down.

It was impossible to stand up with a quarter of her body smashed, after all.

Considering her current situation, Mitsuki began remember that she had been fighting that blonde beauty, and that she had been defeated before she could even do anything to defend herself. She couldn't really remember the end of that fight...it seemed she had fallen from the school building, landing in the debris with her body crushed in the aftermath.

Either way, she couldn’t move anymore.

"... I used to be able to move immediately afterwards whenever I fell down!"

Mitsuki frowned and looked unhappy, as her tail fell upon the ground. She had discovered her ability when she first come to Kannonsakazaki High School so long ago, as she’d fallen from the roof while trying to climb to the top.

"... What is this? It feels like my Fragment is shrinking."

Mitsuki opened her hand, then clenched her hand into a fist again. She tilted her head and tried this a few times. She then opened her eyes, pouted, and put her pale face in her hands as she looked around.

"Right, where is big sis? Did big sis get knocked down from there too~?"

Mitsuki felt very uneasy without big sis next to her, like a lost child. There was doubt in all of her movements, and her cheeks paled too. She stretched out her hand purposelessly in her confusion, not knowing what to do. She moved away pieces of the debris, even though Saibara Mina, the elder sister whom Saibara Mitsuki admired and adored, wasn't a bug, and obviously wouldn't be able to hide under the rubble.

"Big sis!"

This was so odd. Her sister Mina would never leave her behind and disappear on her own. Her strong sister always stood by her and protected her. If she ever heard Mitsuki calling out 'big sis' like this, she would definitely put on a very annoyed expression, but at the same time, would stretch out her hand to help her little sister.

Then, Mitsuki remembered... The last time that she called out Mina's name but she didn't appear was when Mina lost her battle with Eguriko, and suffered a severe wound. Mina was probably like this too right now. Big sis was probably lying somewhere, barely alive -

A sorrowful feeling welled up within Mitsuki's mind. Tears welled out of her eyes and she sobbed, with even her breathing becoming difficult. Mitsuki started to behave strangely. She started to look everywhere around her, and she twisted her hands together.

"Big sis... big sis."

There was a bumping sound behind her.

Mitsuki's expression suddenly changed, and she turned around defenselessly.

At that moment, Mitsuki's chest suffered a heavy impact.

"!?"

It was as if a car had purposely crashed into her. Mitsuki's frail body was tossed away, rolling, rolling, rolling on the ground, until it came to a halt. Now, she was completely unable to move, save for coughing up blood.

"...Whoa!"

There was no feeling of pain.

Her nociceptive nerves had already been broken. However, Mitsuki had was already gravely wounded from when she had fallen from the school building. Her bones and internal organs, in their current state, could not endure such a strong impact. Not without quietly resting for a while.

But now there was no time. No time to rest. No time for Mitsuki to calmly think and make decisions.

She coughed continuously, swallowing saliva mixed with blood. She moaned as she wiped away the traces of blood at the corners of her mouth.

Mitsuki propped up her upper body using all of her strength, and she saw that approaching alien at the same time.

"Monster...!?"

As Mitsuki stated, it was indeed a monster. A monster that existed in the gap between Hell and the mortal world, something that existed in that unperceivable world, one of the natural enemies of humanity, which Mitsuki and Mina had slaughtered numerous times before. As if it was chasing down Mitsuki, one of those monsters rushed towards her bestially.

It was like a beetle, with a shining black carapace and disgusting, segmented feelers, its heavy body supported by sharp feet. And worst of all, sprouting from each of its feelers were innumerable eyeballs, with their gaze focused on the immobile pray before it - Mitsuki.

Mitsuki sat on the ground and looked dazedly at the scene before her. The vibration that rumbled through the ground made her frown, and she suddenly

realized this was not the time to space out. Hurriedly, she started to struggle, but her body was unable to move.

A strange impulse rushed into her mind, and she instinctively thought of the tragedy that was soon to follow.

She would be flattened by the monster.

She would be flattened into a pulp with a squelch, and she would then be eaten.

"... How can this be happening?!"

A very sad feeling welled up within her. Mitsuki's two hands, wearing the huge gloves, suddenly pushed forward suddenly.

"How can this happen? I'm looking for big sis. Don't bother me!"

With a thump, Mitsuki's entire body suffered a powerful impact, but she remained immobile. Facing the enormous monster that rushed towards her, Mitsuki's gloves that could reflect all intended damage stiffened to stop the enemy's huge impact. Mitsuki used all her strength and roared. Both her hands held onto the creature’s feelers, squashing the countless eyeballs on it.

It was very hard to fight these monsters, as they didn’t bear much malevolence. They only attacked Mitsuki out of their predatory instincts towards humans.

As the personification of retribution, Unpleasant Counter-Current's abilities didn't seem to be very effective.

"Urk... Gah... Gaaaaah."

As she expected, Mitsuki's gloves were pierced by the sharp thorns on the monster's feelers. Her soft fingers and palm were both wounded, and blood seeped out. Cold sweat dripped down her face. Even though she didn't feel pain, it was still very problematic to get wounded.

Crack crack crack. She could hear some very sharp sounds. Was this a tragic sound coming out of Mitsuki's body, or the wailing of her enemy? Both the outer appearance and their sounds, not to mention their existence, all disgusted her.

Mitsuki's cheeks started to become red, and started to yell excitedly like a kid:

"I, I'm looking for big sis~ I need to look for her very hard ★ If there are bad kids who dare to stop me -"

Her enemy's enormous body rose into the sky in the blink of an eye. Using just her hands, Mitsuki lifted up the screaming, dazed monster.

The enormous beetle that was lifted up in the air at an angle struggled and tried to resist. However, it was all useless. If Mitsuki wanted to be serious, her arms can even uproot entire trees from the ground.

"I will kick them and kick them down into Hell~★"

Her unwounded left foot launched itself upwards. Avoiding the feelers and the back, protected by the carapace, she viciously kicked the creature's soft, exposed underbelly.

The monster roared, with the sound of metal being torn and broken. Yellowish brown liquid erupted from its body and the rest of its torso broke apart. The pieces shattered, flying with a thud into the broken school building – and with its body was completely torn apart, and it soon died.

The monster's feet and feelers fell all around her, with the ground splattered with its innards. Looking at this scene, Mitsuki put down her still-uplifted feet and panted.

"Phew... It moved on."

Mitsuki put her hands together and muttered a Buddhist prayer. She laughed at her own comedic moments in the middle of the battle.

"Mmm, Mitsuki-chan is so awesome. I'm definitely the undefeatable Unpleasant Counter-Current~"

Mitsuki nodded and started to think. Why were there monsters appearing here? Although they had acted oddly of late, it was usually very rare to run into a monster like this.

"... Mmm, well, my job isn't to think anyways."

She put her hand on the debris next to her. Using that to support her weight, she finally managed to stand with a single foot. The bones and flesh of her right foot were mashed together and was completely smashed – she wouldn't be able

to use it for a while. And though one of Unpleasant Counter-Current's abilities was to absorb the evil intent of others, and use that to accelerate her physical healing, there was no one around her with any malevolence whatsoever.

What should she do? She could not even walk in her current state, and could only keep looking around like a lost child.

The darkness felt heavy. She was feeling more and more anxious in the dark, and she wanted to cry. She could only hear her own heartbeat, thundering in the clammy silence. It was as if the world had already been completely destroyed, and the night was everlasting, with the dawn never to show its face again – there was a primordial sense of horror and solitude.

Plonk.

The sound came from a place that was astonishingly close to her. A thick malice started to float over towards her, so thick it could almost be discerned with the naked eye.

Mitsuki looked that way out of reflex.

"… Big sis?"

Mina stood there. She stood underneath the foggy light of the cloud-covered moon, with her long white braid gleaming, and a soft smile surfacing across her peaceful face. She was the big sister whom Mitsuki adored. She was her family, someone who had always supported Mitsuki's mind from when they were still human, and even more so now that they were no longer mortal.

Mitsuki finally felt reassured when she saw Mina. But what was that… What was that malicious feeling just now? Mitsuki was somewhat concerned about that. She quickly thought it over, as if she was considering what she should do next.

The beating of her heart indeed slowed. It felt unbelievable even to herself.

Mitsuki thought the previous feeling was probably an illusion caused by her anxious mindset. She deliberately made a comical pose and put her hands on her waist, and propped up her chest as she said:

"Awesome. I was worried. Seriously, I told you not to leave me behind and run

away on your own ★.”

“…”

Mitsuki looked at Mina, who was staying silent for some reason, and asked with a giggle:

“What’s wrong? It looks like the fight is over. But we still need to find Gu-Gu and Niku-Niku~. And there are also things like that monster just now. They might have started to multiply. We need to check them out in the town. Otherwise –”

Mina stretched out her arm, her hand pierced through Mitsuki’s thin chest.

“… Huh?”

She couldn’t comprehend this. She couldn’t understand this. She didn’t respond to it at all. Her mind was a blank.

Blood erupted out from her form. It was red, crimson liquid, the fountain of life. It sprayed onto her clothes and face. It was her own blood. It was that red, slightly warm, rather metallic liquid. Her vision started to be covered by this crimson shade. Behind all that red, Mitsuki saw that Mina was still smiling softly.

No. Something must be wrong.

That was a despicable smile.

“Who… are you?”

Mitsuki tightly gripped the hand that had pierced her heart. Even so, she knew the struggle was pointless from the bottom of her heart. Blood seeped out from the corners of her mouth, and her head drooped.

Huh?

Huh...?

"Unpleasant Counter-Current."

A cold voice that made her shiver, one she had never heard before, floated into her ears.

"You are a bit too inexperienced for wanting to live till the final battle!"

The hand was suddenly pulled from her chest, with blood erupted from the wound it left behind with frightening force. Mitsuki couldn't bear it anymore. She fell to her knees, her eyes widening in too-late surprise.

Huh...?

"I will kill you here. At least thank me for it."

The other woman sniggered coldly as she turned around, the figure of Saibara Mina blurring and shifting, until it became someone completely different.

This was alteration of the flesh, the power of Ultimate Shield The Weakest.

"...Why?"

Mitsuki could not understand this. Could it be that this person changed into the form of the big sister whom Mitsuki liked the most? That she punched through Mitsuki's chest without hesitation, at the time when Mitsuki finally calmed down? How could she do something this cruel? It was incomprehensible. Mitsuki shouldn't be able to feel pain anymore, but her head hurt so much.

Her entire body was shaking as her sight started to dim.

Drop by drop, her life was draining away with the blood oozing from her body. Mitsuki felt the violent thoughts filling her opponent's soul to the brim, and she moaned:

"Why... did you have to do something so cruel?"

The faces of those people most important to her surfaced within her mind. Mina, Tatsue, Mitaka, Guriko, Kajiri, the people she'd met at school and in the town. They all surged up within her mind. It wasn't enough. She hadn't managed to get on well with anyone. She still wanted to talk to other people. She still wanted to keep living with them.

"Why?"

The culprit turned around, and then changed into Mitsuki's appearance. She had a hat with round ears and a cute, curly tail decorating her behind. Could it be - Mitsuki started to realize the other's plan – could it be that she wanted to appear as Mitsuki to her companions, and then...

Why was she capable of such cruel deeds?

"Oho. You keep saying these naive things... You really are an angel."

She laughed coldly and amusedly and departed in Mitsuki's form. Mitsuki slumped on the ground. She still looked at that retreating figure, incredulously, and mumbled in a low voice:

"Devil..."

The giant Fragment named Unpleasant Counter-Current was residing with Mitsuki. She bathed in the malice of the entire world every day, and yet Mitsuki still loved this world and the people who populated it. Humans had carried the burden of original sin since the days of Adam and Eve. Perhaps they started to hurt each other back then, and just kept bringing pain to each other ever since.

Still, no matter at what point in their history, humans would not give up on loving others. If it weren't for this, humanity would have been destroyed a long time ago. No matter what kind of a person one was, there would be no malice in their heart of hearts. That was what Mitsuki had believed in all along.

She had believed this... But now, Mitsuki had been killed by a fellow creature, as if she was an unneeded thing, a torn book to be thrown away. It was - too strange. It was as if the other woman was a monster. As if her entire body and soul were completely manipulated by malice -

Ahh.

She couldn't move anymore. The sounds of her own moans softly swept past her ears, and her consciousness started to fade.

Would this be the end? Would she die here? But it was fine. To be honest, Mitsuki had already died once in that annoying Institute. She only miraculously returned to life because of Single Room's ability. Because of him, she could eat

chocolate sundaes again, could go everywhere.

There were no regrets - she had tried her hardest at living.

She was just... a little lonely.

Death was very very lonely. There was so much regret, so much anxiety, so much pain.

This... must be the proof of having lived a happy life. She was the girl Mitsuki, whom no one loved and was despised by all. Even so, she lived her life to the full, and was about to die with all sorts of happy memories. This should be happiness. But... she still felt a little... lonely.

*If possible, if it's only for a little bit, I want to play with them for a while. I want to take care of Mina, who never knew how to do housework. I also want to wait and see Mitaka and Tatsue's wedding. And I, I also... want to fall in love with someone, or something like that.*

Tears slid down her eyes. Ahh, so lonely.

"... Why would I be crying?"

The blood that seeped out of her heart mixed with the tears that dripped from her eyes. She could immerse herself silently in this - this would be the place where Mitsuki's life ended. For this world, this would be the second sacrifice produced after the Fragment of Catastrophe Poison, that of Breaksun's heart, was gorged out. Meanwhile, for some select people - this would be eternal separation with this lovely girl.

"It should be - very happy, shouldn't it?"

And with that, Saibara Mitsuki passed away.

Blinding light shone from the classroom. Rinne, who was standing there smiling, gradually disappeared. That pure white light was threatening to completely engulf and soak through the world, but Gankyū Eguriko frowned. She had thought her eyes were seeing a mirage during the numerous flashes of light.

However, in her daze, she thought she saw the light swallow Rinne's form, with her friend vanishing from sight.

Clouds covered the sky, hiding the moon and stars. Even so, the broken school building and the ruins that remained were still clearly visible.

"…"

The ground beneath Guriko's feet was covered with blood. The broken pieces of Melodia Noise Tear Song's body and the remains of her organs, these remaining morsels after Guriko's meal, were scattered all around her. However, miraculously, Joker was still alive. Melodia Noise Tear Song's body could no longer move, and she could only make intermittent moans as she shivered.

But of course, that was to be expected. The majority of her body had already been chewed off by Guriko.

Guriko was impassive as she looked at Melodia Noise Tear Song – only the woman's skeleton, head, and feet remained. The flesh and bones scattered around her

were freshly torn off a human body. Even though Guriko had been the one who had done this, she did not dare to face what she had done. The large amount of blood that soaked through the ground emitted a thick and foul smell, and it was nauseating.

With a sigh, Guriko reverted to her human shape, the red wings and carapace of her monstrous form fading as she returned to herself. The blood that coated her body did not, leaving her covered by a red sheen. Fresh blood dripped down the corners of her mouth and her white skin, originally so pristine, was stained.

Guriko shook her head as if she was a wet dog, shaking off much of the dampness on her. The blood instantly dried and turned to a darker shade, and clung to her skin.

She spat out Melodia Noise Tear Song's hair, which was stuck between her teeth, with a spitting sound. It was disgusting.

"… still alive, Melodia Noise, Tear Song?"

The older woman's body shook when she heard this. Was it fortunate or not to still retain consciousness in this state?

Guriko's mind was empty, and she looked blankly at the school building that glowed in the distance. Her brain seemed unable to think normally after she finished the ferocious fight just now. She felt as if she was drunk. She was emotionally very aroused, but a nauseating feeling was rising up from her chest, and she felt an ominous chill.

"Do you know why the school is glowing?"

Rinne was over there. Guriko tried her hardest to look that way. Even though it was too dark to be certain, she knew she hadn't made a mistake. It was indeed Rinne. She wanted to gallop to her side right now and embrace her tightly. However, the unnatural state of the school building was very suspicious. She should not rush there blindly, even though she still had a sliver of hope in her heart towards the possibility that Rinne was still safe and sound.

"…"

Melodia Noise Tear Song didn't answer her.

She couldn’t, after all, as she had no strength left. And even if she did, her larynx – all the tendons and muscles of her throat – had already been consumed by Guriko.

Yes, she had been eaten by Guriko. Guriko had eaten this monstrous woman – no, Guriko herself was the monster. Although she had always lived with this illusion, she could no longer turn back now. No one would consider Guriko a human ever again.

She was a monster that ate humans.

Yes, a monster. She was a beast with no right to love others – but her desire to help Rinne was genuine. Rinne might be able to embrace her, even if she became a monster.

Although she knew this sweet emotion would make her feel confused, Guriko was too fragile to even stand right now without leaning on this idea.

*Rinne. Rinne. I want to see you.*

*I want to hear your soft voice, your kind smile, and feel your warm hands. Guriko wanted to feel all this.*

*I am so lonely. I don’t know why, I just feel alone.*

“Rinne…”

Melodia Noise

Guriko moved her eyes away from Tear Song, who remained silent, and slowly walked towards the school. She couldn’t leave Rinne like this, in a place that was glowing strangely for some reason.

Everything was dark around them, with the only light coming from the school building. The Mushi, with their red eyes, were looking at them from their surroundings in an annoying way. It was as if this world was a drawing that had been deliberately portrayed in a twisted way. It was an uneasy world, one that filled men’s hearts with a chill.

“…”

Melodia N

Suddenly, Guriko stopped walking towards the school, and looked towards Tear Song. She didn’t understand those feelings herself. It was perhaps not pity – but she still asked with a feeling didn’t quite understand:

“Then shell I send you on your way?”

“…”

Blood. Flesh. Organs. Even her life force was all but drained. She was in a state where even madness would not be unexpected. However, she only tilted her head, and shook slightly as if she was a wriggling infant – as if she was completely crushed by something and had no ways of fighting back. Guriko nodded as if she understood her and said.

“Yes. I don’t want to die either.”

Only endless sorrow surfaced in those insect-like, red eyes.

“… Why, Melodia Noise, Tear Song?”

Guriko walked forward to look for Mitsuki and Mina. She called out Melodia Noise Tear Song’s name as she went further and further, with Melodia Noise Tear Song’s body gradually disappearing from Guriko’s view.

*It was so scary. So scary so scary. So scary scary scary. Death is so scary. It is more scary than anything else. I would completely disappear. I would cease to exist on earth.*

It was way too scary. Everything she saw now, everything she was feeling, everything she was thinking – everything would disappear completely.

Just thinking of this would drive her mad with fear.

Melodia Noise Tear Song – Sakaki Joker was simply scared of the end of her life. Indeed, the time for her to disappear approached little by little. Why was she so scared? Guriko also asked her this. However, even Joker didn’t understand.

It was such a joyless life. A life spent escaping from this fear. This aimless, empty, mundane and ordinary life.

“…”

All sorts of scenes began to surface in her mind.

Like a movie reaching its conclusion, her life was about to reach its end. That was what Joker thought.

She could see it now. That dirty alley in the ghetto. Her mother's grotesque sleeping form. That empty church where no God resided. The old woman in the neighborhood who kept talking about her worries. The Bible. Joker standing over the empty ruins of the church – and Sakaki Ganhō, who had been standing by her side before she realized it. That very annoying man who visited Joker's church in order to ask those incredulous questions.

Just why was that? She could not understand it at all now. Why had she done that back then? Did she give up on herself? Joker had grasped that man's hand tightly. She detested her heartless mother, who immersed herself in her lascivious games with men every day. Therefore, she kept her distance from all men.

It was her first time touching the hand of a member of the stronger sex.

Ganhō. That man with hands warm as flames.

For Joker, who had always lived in calmness, he was a man whom she completely could not understand. For her, his passion was a mystery. She didn't have any emotions such as love – she couldn't.

She didn't understand anything about emotions such as love.

She hated Ganhō very much. They didn't share anything in common. The way they thought was completely different. They had stated fighting from the moment they met. He was arrogant, and he didn't have clear thoughts, but he had some strange levels of acuity in some weird areas. He enjoyed opening other people's old wounds.

She had decided numerous times to never see him again and say farewell. At that time, she honestly thought it would be fine if she never saw him again.

However, unbelievably, he was beside her when she came to her senses. Joker ran far away from him – and, in his arrogance, he used his incredible fortune and power and sent out his underlings to find her. They brought her back, and he hugged her tightly in his arms – he was a sly and completely unpredictable man. Why was he so obsessed with someone as minute as her? Joker never figured

this out. He never said anything like ‘I love you’ to Joker. No matter how many times they whispered tender words to each other, how many time they kissed, or how many times their body tangled together, Joker had never thought he would love her.

He was simply someone similar to her, someone who needed other people – perhaps that was why.

He had so much more luck than everyone else in the world. However, he still had the same fears as she did. He was in fact someone who felt loneliness more easily than anyone else. He only said those foolish words to attract others’ attention. He was a naïve child like that. He feared that this world might not have a God in his naiveté, and he craved warmth from others all the time. He was the same as Joker.

Did he not know how to love others? Did he feel lonely, but had no idea how to remove that loneliness?

They were the same. She was the same. Ganhō was the same as her – But even if she realized this right now, it was too late.

Did Ganhō ever regret meeting her? Regret meeting this woman, who was possessed by the huge Fragment, despite not knowing anything about the power now within her? That man accelerated his own death because he became involved with a woman like that. If he hadn’t chased after immortality, he might have lived a happier life.

She recalled the scene when they met for the first time in the church.

She had continued to pray every day even when she came to the realization that God did not exist. That foolish man said to her: ‘I will become God’. Such foolhardy words. And though that man never became God, for a very brief moment - even Joker’s heart had been greatly moved.

It was as if they were children snuggling up to each other for warmth when they were lonely. That kind of warmth was particularly hot. She remembered his body heat then. She had closed his eyes, and they shared the shaking of their bodies together.

For some reason, Ganhō never touched any woman except Joker. Had he

wanted, he could have had any beautiful woman he desired, but he probably hated that. *Other people are scary. I know. I know, Ganhō.*

Why did she only remember these important things when she was about to die? How did she only realize how irreplaceable those emotions are, when her life was about to be over? Why had those happy moments all disappeared, as soon as she discovered them?

Ganhō.

He should be a man she detested very much. But – Guryū, Tatsue – when she gave birth to them, she was laughing. She laughed with him, as if she was like any other ordinary human.

Was that happiness?

Was that – the warmth that Joker sought?

Why? Why? Why? Why did she only realize this when she had reached such a point of no return?

Ganhō. Guryū. Tatsue.

Why could she never find a future, where all of them could live together in peace and silence?

She was so sad, and so scared… and so lonely. So sad. So sad.

"…"

She suddenly felt that –

– Someone was standing next to her.

It was a small figure. She realized who it was after seeing that unique shadow. It was Gankyū Eguriko's companion – it was Saibara Mitsuki, Unpleasant Counter-Current. The school, shining with light, was behind her. Mitsuki herself was looking down with an expressionless face.

Why was she still alive? Did she come here to give her the final blow?

As if she was about to spit blood, the remains of her larynx in her throat moved. The sharp sounds it created were entirely incomprehensible, but it didn't matter anymore.

“…What are you gonna do?”

After Joker spat out the question with difficulty, Mitsuki giggled. She then licked her lips and softly touched her face with her hand. It was a familiar female face, a beautiful face mixed with scorn.

A disguise? No – to be precise, her body changed.

This Mitsuki was fake. Someone changed into her form.

And the person with such distaste as to change into her –

“ Catastrophe The Weakest.”

“Yo, Joker.”

The true face of that cheater, Catastrophe The Weakest, revealed itself coldly. It was the face of a woman no one had ever seen. She looked like she was very bored, and both her hands were behind her head.

“I should have been the happiest person on earth.”

She had heard this voice before. It was a voice that she remembered. Joker opened her eyes. Could it... could it be? Catastrophe The Weakest, who sometimes worked with her and sometimes opposed her - could she be…

"... Moon?"

Those long-past memories flashed before Joker's eyes. She remembered that alley in the ghetto, full of death and betrayal, and that girl who was friends with her, the one whose eyes had burned with ambition. Moon. That girl who had declared she would become the happiest person on Earth.

As if Moon had not heard Joker, she gently extended her arms.

"Come. The extraordinary genius of the century, the magician Mon Lambo, is here!"

She said this coldly and lowered her head. Then, as if she was very angry, she started to pace in circles, with creases appearing on the bridge of her nose due to her anger.

"You don't know who Mon Lambo is? ... You really don't know. Hmph, am I just one of those mass-consumed entertainment products after all? Ahh, this is so

upsetting. I'm going mad. Praise me more. Look at me. Only love me. Only worship me. Everyone everyone everyone..."

Suddenly, scorched deep scars, gradually rotting and becoming full of pus, appeared on her beautiful face and formed giant blisters. Those rotting and pussy blisters were terrifying to just look at. It was a chilling scene.

"Hey, Joker. Am I pretty?"

Looking at her gradually crumbling, dissolving face, with her cheek bones almost showing beneath the flesh, Joker did not say anything. Moon, the girl she knew, had a beautiful face. And precisely because of that, this alien and demonic face was even more terrifying.

"Hey, hey, you don't have to talk. I understand... I understand! I can't possibly be as beautiful as before, right? But why must get I kicked out when I am no longer beautiful? These stupid idiots - they never discovered where true worth lies, and only chased after new things in their greed and impatience... Stupid people, stupid world, stupid God, stupid fate. But rest assured, Joker, I will destroy them all, and I will show you how I will change everything!"

She cackled with a fearsome aura, as if she was a demon. Moon was completely immersed in this. She stretched out her arms and screamed:

"I will become the God of this world no matter what! I will be different from this current talentless God. I will become the God of the most high. I will make this world absolutely marvelous! It will be beautiful! Just! Peaceful! It will definitely be the best world. I will make it so. I will show you... I, I am the one!"

"Moon..."

Joker couldn't understand her words at all. Even so, Joker still felt a sliver of sorrow. Something must have happened to Moon when Joker and her were still children, when they were still good friends. She didn't know what happened, but it was certainly very serious.

Moon was the same as Ganhō. She was perhaps similar to Joker as well. She wanted to become great. She wanted to become powerful. She wanted to be above others - she sought those worthless things so much and allowed other, more important things to brush past her despite how much nearer at hand they

were.

It was such a sad thing.

Joker lost all her facades, all her pretences. She was that girl in the alleyway of the ghetto again, looking up at her old friend. They sat next to each other on the roadside when they were young. They both had their arms crossed over their hungry tummies, and talked about their dreams for the future as they gazed at the sky. They talked about the friends and family they would have in the future.

"If you become... the happiest person in the world, then what would you want to do?"

If she understood all the truths of the world, and also obtained all the riches and treasures on earth, and became greater than anyone else alive - what would she do then? She would only be able to remain at that position till the end. It must be so. Even though she became the happiest person in the world, she might still not be satisfied.

Compared to that -

Wouldn't an embrace from someone she loved be a happier occurrence? Even if it was just for a brief moment? To become happier, to become happier - such desires have no end. And once she reached the zenith, the only thing left would be to fall. Like Sisyphus, she would sink into a never ending torment.

That was probably how it went. It was already too late when she realized this. However, it was far more painful for Joker to talk to her son as a mother and then leave him, than to waste her time to chase after eternal life.

Yes, Moon was different from her, who was about to die. There were still many more things left for Moon to do. However, if she only strove toward her distant goal by herself and had no one beside her, she would still be far from happiness.

"Joker!"

Moon shook her head as if she was feeling sentimental about something. Her head lolled to one side, as if she was lost in thought.

"You've never been very motivated. Could it be that you are also one of those despicable idiots, who would cluster together to seek some boring

entertainment?"

Even if she was despicable.

Even if others mocked her. Even if her happiness was something others looked down upon, even if it was cheap and ordinary.

Joker still wanted that happiness.

"Moon..."

Tears shimmered in Crybaby Joker's one remaining good eye. She had always concealed her true emotions out of embarrassment or fear.

However -

"Are you very lonely? Do you just want others to acknowledge you?"

Those brief words were enough to trigger an enormous explosion.

"Don't you dare to pretend that you understand everything!"

Moon reached out her fingers in rage and stabbed at Joker. Even though Joker's body was already torn and broken by Guriko, Moon still stabbed through her without mercy. She pierced what little remained of Joker's body with innumerable stabs, blows falling as thick as heavy rain. She dealt the final heavy blow towards Joker, who was barely alive, and pushed her towards the final annihilation.

"... I am a woman who will become God!"

Joker's childhood friend, Moon, said this as if she had something she relied upon.

"Farewell, Joker. I will fulfill your wish. If you die - then you will certainly live in

eternal silence."

Joker's life was already over before Moon finished her sentence.

"..."

Facing Joker's unmoving corpse, Moon showed an expression of disgust, and stood there for a long time.

Breaksun Hanselmine startled awake from her scary dream, and discovered that the world around her was covered by pristine white snow.

"Woah, is this a combination of Eastern and Western styles?!"

"What the heck are you talking about, Breako?!"

She calmed down after her initial shock. She lifted her head up at that familiar, unguarded voice. The red-haired boy with puppy-like clear eyes - Nikuyama Kajiri - was standing before her. He found her.

They were very close to each other.

They were sitting very close together... or should she say they were in each other's arms?

Breaksun was a bit confused. Her head was full of questions. She lowered her head.

"Ahh, um."

Faced towards the boy's slightly blushing face, which had a trace of surprise, she asked in a sisterly voice:

"What's wrong, Kajiri? Um, why are you hugging me so tight... Ahhh?!"

She had no recollection of this place. She then stopped talking and couldn't help but take in her surroundings.

This was - hmm, a corridor in a high school? One side of the wall was covered with windows, and the polished floor made of polyester was sparkling next to it.

It was slightly different from how things were in Breaksun's home country, but she understood where this was because she had seen such scenes on TV. But why - why was she sleeping here?

And the corridor in front of her was very strange too.

"..."

It was little wonder she thought the world was covered in snow. The school building was filled with a blinding white light. What was going on? Debris and dirt were all flying in the air. All was pitch black outside the window, but why was the school building the only thing with such radiance? She could hardly open her eyes.

Breaksun was lying in Kajiri's arms, and he was hugging her tightly. They were on the third story of the building, and it seemed the building was seriously tilted. Almost all the windows were broken, and many parts of the corridor had already crumbled and fallen down.

It was obvious that something serious had happened here. And, as Breaksun expected, she didn't remember any of it. She tried her best to scour the memories in her head, but she only recalled she went to the karaoke with Kajiri to sing, then lots of tanks popped out... then her memories stopped as if it had been cut off, and she couldn't remember anything anymore.

"Um..."

"Breako, how are you feeling? Do you feel any pain anywhere?"

Huh, did Kajiri suddenly get very gentle?

Breaksun tilted her head and made deep breathes. Her wrist made a cracking sound when she stood up.

"Not much... I don't feel anything wrong with my body. I feel really energized."

"Really? That's wonderful..."

Oho, Kajiri was seriously getting happy. That was so weird. She couldn't understand that. She tried to pat his head, but he was not resisting it earnestly like before. How did Kajiri become so weird?

Kajiri lowered his body and said in something in a low voice. His long fringe

covered the expression on his face.

"... Although it was my first time resurrecting someone, it seems like I did a pretty good job."

"Huh? What did you say just now, Kajiri?"

Breaksun narrowed her eyes due to the blinding light coming from the school building and asked Kajiri, but he suddenly kicked Breaksun's behind.

"Nothing. It's Breako. It's all Breako... you made me so worried. Don't leave me anymore. Seriously..."

"It hurts hurts hurts. Why did you kick me Kajiri? This is domestic violence. Violence from a lover who's living with me and is even younger than me...! I'm so pitiful!"

They were arguing and making exchanges like usual. It was such a peaceful life.

But it was such a dreamy feeling. Her body felt like it was floating.

"Oh... Ahh."

Suddenly, Kajiri tumbled, as if he was blinded by the strong light... He stilled his stance, planting his feet firmly in the ground, then walked forward while holding Breaksun's hand. Breaksun did not know what was going on for a moment.

She was being dragged forward and stumbling over herself. A crumbling corridor stretched out before her. It was the third floor. Moreover, Breaksun was someone who was not good with sports. Her condition was also very bad, and her head felt dizzy.

"Ah, ah, um, Kajiri!"

"What is it this time? As long as you are ok, hurry and escape with me - Breako, this building is almost gone... seriously, stop acting so dizzy and so casual!"

Dizzy and casual?

What - did that mean?

As Breaksun thought this, she was dragged forward by Kajiri, who was as short as her but had far greater strength. Breaksun had no control over her body, as if she was tightly tied to the bottommost level of Hell. A huge hole was on the floor of the corridor in front of her, and broken and bent iron poles were poking out of it. It would be the ideal height to commit suicide from here, and the hole was about the right size. Of course, Breaksun didn't have wings or a rocket pack behind her. If she walked that way, and fell down when she stepped out...

Breaksun had to give up this idea when she looked at Kajiri's very serious expression, and looked elsewhere. The large majority of the school building was gone. Apart from the starlit sky and the ground, there were only small hills of debris and ruins along the direction they were going. The height was dizzying. It would definitely hurt if she fell from here. She would definitely be severely wounded, or even die.

"Kajiri? Um, there was a guy in Greek mythology, someone who flew in the sky with wings made out of wax and feather, called Daedalus -”

"Shut up. We're jumping."

As Kajiri said this, Breaksun's face suddenly became extremely pale. Kajiri grabbed her hand, stamped hard on the floor, and jumped up into the air. Breaksun was dragged by him and flew into the sky as well. Then the two of them obeyed Newton's law of physics, and fell towards the ground.

The outside world was cold, and there was a peculiar sensation of floating. The dark night felt oppressive, and there was no light. However, there was a powerful light, as strong as an airburst bomb, illuminating the school building. One could see the curving countryside roads around it, and the roofs of the

shops in the distance were shrunken as if they were toys.

It felt so fun – but that sensation only lasted for a few seconds. They then fell rapidly thanks to the unavoidable gravity towards the ground. Breaksun grabbed hold of Kajiri as tightly as she could, and opened her eyes and screamed in terror.

"Wah, wahhhh, I'm falling! I'm falling down! I'm being forced to commit suicide with my younger lover! Dad and Mum in Heaven, I'm so sorry!"

"Shut up! If you want to get out of this situation faster, this is the only way!"

The wind whipped past their faces. Their clothes flapped, and the scenery keep falling upwards. As if this was not her business, Breaksun only just then recognized that she was falling - Meanwhile, Kajiri took out the sharp and pointy crucifix as usual, and stabbed it into his wrist without hesitation.

A mist of blood seeped out, as thick as the stars in the sky.

Breaksun had completely lost control of herself. She was screaming loudly in a panic and crying. Kajiri, however, was obviously upset and his anger was written all over his face. He said with a low voice: "... Breako!"

"Huh?! Ahhhh, Kajiri!"

She felt Kajiri's warmth as he hugged her with all his strength right as they were about to slam into the ground. However, she also saw the most terrible future possible. She started to imagine the end, as they fell to their death -

Why would it be like this? It was a sensation she had never experienced before, a strong sense of being alive.

This red-haired flatmate she accidentally picked up, who had always stuck to her and kept next to her, and who she actually fancied might become her family in the future... For some reason, his expression looked as if he was crying, yet he still hugged Breaksun tightly.

"... Don't, don't go away on your own anymore."

Breaksun couldn't help but feel a sliver of happiness when she heard this. Yes, no one ever stayed with him. It was as if he had always stayed in his single room, located at the edge of the entire world, where he could only hug his knees and

sit there alone. And she... she wanted to be next to him, next to his boy isolated and forgotten by the entire Earth.

“Loneliness” was definitely a disease. Even if he was an immortal with some incredible power, he would still feel pain from being alone.

He looked so pitiful when he was in pain. Kajiri was only just a kid.

He was a child placed in the middle of a single room with no toys, where no one could hug him, where he was completely forgotten.

“Okay.”

Breaksun smiled.

Yes. At least she would hug him, would give him lots and lots of toys, would talk about all sorts of things with him, and would do her best to make him happy. With that, her own loneliness should disappear too. Everyone will become very happy and full of joy.

“Please let me keep visiting your single room!”

They approached the ground as she said this. The blood that Kajiri already shed was scattered all over the ground. The empty dark school ground looked like a monstrosity with its mouth gaping open.

Ahh. Her feet would be smashed if she landed like this. Breaksun wailed pessimistically:

“No no no it’ll be ok! I was a bird in the previous life, so it doesn’t matter! The birds that flew and fell in love in the sky! Ah, no! It’s got nothing to do with the previous life! I don’t have wings right now. Will I die like this!?”

As she was busy feeling confused, they smashed into the ground with a heavy thud. The dry ground around the school, that apparently solid and even surface, was now full of scattered sharp debris and steel, like a hellish place full of traps. And suddenly… there was a flash of crimson light across the entire spance, almost as if it contained a sheen of blood.

“… Huh?!”

Then… She yelled in happiness.

As if they were on a trampoline, Kajiri and Breaksun jumped and rolled on the very soft ground. It didn't hurt at all. The powerful impact was completely erased, and the only thing left was a gentle and soft touch.

"Huh? Huh? Huh?"

Breaksun looked around and climbed up in a rush, putting her hands onto the ground, feeling that alien sensation. It was soft, squishy, spongy, as if…

"This… This feels almost like strawberry cotton candy! It feels so good to have it so soft!"

"Don't just obsess over how soft it is!"

Kajiri mumbled as an annoyed expression surfaced on his face, and he sighed as he looked at Breaksun, who put her cheek to the ground.

"I haven't told you yet, but this is my ability – I can create and change everything on Earth and their corresponding principles. I tried to make the ground in the school soft… Hmm, looks like it did successfully make us bounce."

After making a suitable explanation, Kajiri suddenly started to wobble.

"- Kajiri?"

Shocked, Breaksun stood up immediately and took hold of Kajiri's body. His face was pallid, as if he was about to fall down.

A long time ago, she heard that using Kajiri's ability would make him lose his life – Breaksun didn't know what happened when she passed out. However, this was already Kajiri's limit. Maybe he used too much of his power.

If this goes on – would Kajiri die?

Breaksun became very anxious. She put her hand on his unconscious forehead and felt his temperature – although there were no reasons to do this.

"Kajiri. Kajiri, are you alright?"

"… Mmm, I'm ok. And… rather than worrying about me, you should worry more about yourself."

Kajiri's breathing, which was rapid and painful, started to calm down. He said to Breaksun with seriousness:

“The Great Fragment within your body - Poison Catastrophe - isn't there anymore. It's like your heart got taken away. Now you're just an ordinary human... You will actually die when you die."

"My heart... got taken away?"

Her words shook with worry, and she put her hand over her breast, where she felt the thumping of her heart.

*What is this?* Breaksun tilted her head, and her face was full of confusion, but Kajiri had already taken her hand and started running again.

She couldn't help but run with him when he dragged her with unbelievable strength, but her mind remained fuddled and confused.

Being someone who was really bad at sports, Breaksun was almost falling down as she complained anxiously to Kajiri:

"Woah - Kajiri, why are you in such a hurry? Where are we going? Didn't you just use your abilities? If you don't rest... and I'm still a bit worried about Eguriko and the others. I want to find..."

"We don't have time for that!"

Kajiri yelled out. He looked to be very concerned and in pain, as if he was terrified of something. They ran as far as they could away from the school building. He stumbled then, as if he was about to fall down, and Breaksun couldn't help herself but move up to him and hold him steady.

Kajiri's eyes, those innocent and clear eyes, like that of an animal - those eyes that reflected the entire world like mirrors of truth - were not looking towards the way they were running towards for some reason. They only gazed towards the light that was spreading from the school.

"It's The Weakest. It's The Weakest - He's being very upset!" Ultimate Shield Ultimate Shield

What was Kajiri seeing? What did he know? Breaksun didn't understand any of that. All she knew was that Kajiri was very afraid, and putting Breaksun instinctively on her guard.

Something -

Something was about to happen.

Or rather, about to end.

She understood now. She understood this now. Every single existence in this world, just like Breaksun, felt that something was about to come to an end.

"God!"

Kajiri roared. He felt that chilling, freezing terror in the depths of his bowels. He called out the name of God. But Breaksun - she didn't know anything. She didn't understand anything. She simply turned back to looking at the school building, following Kajiri's gaze and voice.

"This is a joke! What is this! If this is the truth of the world, if you are indeed God, then what are **we**? You goddamn bastard!"

Kajiri turned around in despair and reached out his hand towards the school, which sparkled with a beautiful light, with a severe and stern expression.

"Why?! Why are **you** - God!?"

Kajiri yelled at the top of his lungs. All was quiet around them - there was no moonlight, no starlight, and all the lights had gone out around the road at night. This was a dim world full of lies and slowly approaching death. As if they were disappearing within this world, they could only walk on as they look upon the glowing school building.

"...Ah!"

In the blink of an eye, Breaksun saw it.

She thought she saw it.

Even the shape of the glowing school building was starting to become fuzzy. But within one of those still intact rooms - behind an open window -

There was a beautiful white figure, emitting an even more brilliant light that dimmed everything else in its brightness.

"..."

That person then started to talk, and Breaksun indeed heard it loudly and clearly. That person's face was full of sorrow, and those words were like a reply to Kajiri's angry roars -

"I'm sorry. **I am God**."

Usagawa Rinne said in a low voice, and moved her gaze away from the school grounds with a sigh. She was the center and source of the light. All around her, the floor, walls, and the ceiling around her had already disappeared, swallowed up and replaced with a space full of a pure white brilliance. The only thing left - no, the only thing Rinne desired to leave intact - was the window that connected her to the outside world. If she looked away, even that would disappear into nothingness, leaving the purity of this unblemished, pristine expanse intact.

It was unlike anything else in the world. It was another world unto itself. It was unimaginable, a whiteness like the empty void after death.

Rinne hugged herself tightly within it and shivered. Scary. This was so scary. There was nothing else. An eternally peaceful world. Never any changes at all. If she disappeared inside here as well, then true nothingness would certainly follow.

*Is this death? Is this death?* She suddenly started to think.

It was a feeling that she seemed to have felt before. It was definitely very familiar. There was a time she had lingered in a state of near death, floating in the narrow space between existence and annihilation. Then, she had been swallowed up by the whiteness and after that... she had completely disappeared in this realm governed by ‘death’.

She had once had this kind of a sensation. Of course, it was only in her mind.

When Rinne woke up, she was still wearing her school uniform, and she had her favourite hair bands in her hair as if she was about to go to school. The thick smell of blood, which had permeated the area just before, had also completely

disappeared. There was no scent left, no sound.

It was very disturbing scene indeed.

Usagawa Rinne gradually realized what was going on, thought it through, and understood it all. Although there were still some stubborn residues of her identity in her mind, and a part of her still obstinately refused to accept her own deduction, it was only a matter of time before she completely acknowledged the truth.

For now she finally remembered.

She remembered those things she wanted to forget, those things that she wouldn't have cared about if she didn't think about them anymore. She understood them all. Why? Why? Rinne pondered this. Even if Single Room hadn’t asked his question, Rinne would still be the first person to disapprove of this fact.

Why was it her? Why?

"..."

She spoke into the emptiness, but there was no reply. That was probably what people meant when they said 'the stubborn truth'. It was the sole truth, and therefore unshakable. There was no meaning behind it. It was cruel and unhuman. It was unforgiving and cold.

She didn't want to understand any such truths. She had always wanted to forget this, and live on peacefully.

However, it was almost over. The world was waking up.

The monsters were approaching slowly. Annihilation, and a despairing eternity - that was what the final judgment.

"..."

Rinne realized something very beautiful was next to her feet. It was a transparent coffin, a magnificent vessel that reflected light, a vessel of glass that sealed the dead within, and it was full of fragrant roses.

Still wearing her school uniform, she gazed at that coffin for very long time.

It was finally time. Rinne sighed and mumbled with an expressionless face:

"... Indeed."

Then God saw it again, that dream He dreamt to escape from His reality.

"It was a dream. This kind of a dream is only a lie. I have seen these kinds of strange dreams before already. A dream where as long as I wake up, I could go to school again with Guriko, go attend Sensei's class, and then... then..."

She stepped into the coffin and laid down, crossing her arms and closing her eyes, looking very peaceful.

"It would be fine... just like this."

Rinne was the center of this glowing void, this shining emptiness. She smiled, but a single tear trickled down the side of her face.

# EPILOGUE 06: The Hunter

Epilogue 06 – The Hunter

Omitted ---

Sterilization Disinfection is the Digestive Organ. Unpleasant Counter-Current is the Excretory Organ. Melodia Noise Tear Song is the Sensory Organ. Poison Catastrophe is the Communication Organ. Ultimate Shield The Weakest is the Flesh and Bones. God Mushi Emperor is the Blood and Lymph. Single Room is the Brain and Spine. Those seven major elements of legends – corresponded with the body parts of us humans, and their corresponding functions also respected the part of the body they echoed. Unpleasant Counter-Current, the Reproductive and Excretory Organ, came from the legend of Sodom and Gomorrah. God gave severe scrutiny to those who deserved to keep living, and established the correct reproductive behaviors. The chances of male sperm surviving in the female uterus was a hundred million to one, and the number of people who successfully escaped from Sodom and Gomorrah was also only three. The declaration of Mary's Immaculate Conception, and the records of Abraham's wife giving birth when she was far past childbearing age, were both powerful evidence of the activities of the Biblical angel who shouldered the duty of Unpleasant Counter-Current.

That was how legends recorded the changes and metamorphoses of the human body. After all, the concept of a 'legend' was merely how one turned the stories of making human lives into meaningful tales.

Then, the person taking on the role of God according to the legends that correspond to our lives, is 'me'.

This 'me' is not the Digestive Organ, nor the Execratory Organ, nor the Brain. 'I' am the body that encompasses all the seven split entities of God, the sense of self that resided in its center, at the very heart of its 'thoughts'. It's not entirely appropriate to call that the soul, but at the end, we are simply 'selves' who move

because of the collection of all parts of our physical flesh. ‘I’ am not Sterilization Disinfection, nor am ‘I’ Unpleasant Counter-Current. Compared to these boring concepts of roles, ‘I’ simultaneously hold the powers of Sterilization Disinfection and Unpleasant Counter-Current. Meanwhile, ‘I’ am also broken into seven different fragments, a legend that is collected together – the ‘me’ who was formed by the lives we lived. The seven Greater Fragments continuously functioned according to their own roles, and that is the aim of ‘my’ continued proper existence, the purpose of ‘God’.

That is the only purpose of ‘my’ existence as ‘God’. Both the body and flesh are involved with each other to fulfill that. If there are any differences, then ‘I’ am only an individual in the end. In comparison, ‘God’ is the collective entity of all of ‘me’, or the existence which collected and averaged everything.

Therefore, there are certainly some differences between ‘me’ and ‘God’. ‘God’ is only an ordinary existence who is vague and non-substantial. There are always exceptions, indeed. Humans born through a Caesarian section are not born through the ‘legend of the flood’ I mentioned before, and they are therefore unrelated to the cause and effects between birth and the flood, and are not fitting for my argument.

Those are the exceptions. Everyone has their multitude of differences, but even so, I am proposing this –

- This unified structure between God and me.

No one has dared to imagine themselves as the absolute existence – that is, the one who resides high above, the omnipotent and omniscient God. That is a delusion, an existence that we cannot achieve except through delusions. The complete God is a delusion. All the miracles in this world are incidents. All the legends are but stories. And I am God. We became Gods because we have understand this.

If you feel pessimistic about this world, then consider how you are as a person before you pray to God. The world will change according to the self’s subjective feelings. If you are going through a lucky period of time, then the entire world will feel lucky. If you think the world turns with you at its center, then the world really will do that with regard to you, and you will become God. You can become

the center of the world, become the hero of the legend. The moment that God, which only exists within your concept of self, descends unto you, is the moment when you feel that the entire world is under your control. That’s what you should feel.

Awaken, O all ye Gods who remain in slumber!

Understand this unified structure between God and Me, and slay that empty God who resides inside our delusions!

The Unified Structure between God and Me – by Akutagawa Shirayuki, Class 1-D of the Municipal Kanayagi High School

Back in the days she always felt that even though the word ‘Dragon’ was in her name, it still had an inferior presence to the ‘Dragon’ in her older brother’s name.

Now she thought about it, it was really silly.

Names had nothing to do with anything. It didn't matter if she couldn't become God, either.

If she was a dragon, then she could just live happily as a dragon.

"Mitaka. Mitaka? If you don't get up soon, you're gonna be late for school.

Kuroki Tatsue left her own mansion and wandered into the corridors of the houses occupied by the servants, and knocked gently on the door with the name' Takamikado Mitaka' written on the plate hanging over it. However, she received no reply. She tilted her head, her expression obviously saying 'Mitaka, you bastard, you dare to make me wait for you?". She puffed up her cheeks in anger, as if she was just a little child.

Tatsue was dressed completely in black. Her long dress and her hair decorations were both completely black, and her hair and eyes were also sparkling with an ebony sheen. Although this outfit looked rather like a mourning

dress, she managed to make it carry a feeling of nobility. However, since she wore this kind of clothing on a daily basis, it might be that Tatsue only wore this because of her own twisted sense of fashion, and not because she wanted to appear regal.

No matter what, Takamikado Mitaka was raised to be the servant of Tatsue, who was the only child of the extravagantly rich Kuroki family. They went to the same school, and despite their differences in age, they always went to school together.

It was Mitaka who usually visited Tatsue and picked her up to go to school in the morning. However, Tatsue waited for a long time today and he never showed up. She was concerned that maybe he left her and went to school on his own and ran over to his room, feeling very worried.

He was an existence who seemed he would disappear if she didn't hug him tightly in her arms. He lived in the gap between the ordinary and the extraordinary, and was a very strange boy. Tatsue was no longer surprised to see supernatural events happening around him.

"Mitaka? I'm coming in."

She opened the door, and the room was very dark. This room used to be very messy, with his possessions scattered everywhere. Now, after Mitaka made a thorough cleanup, it was no longer as repulsive as before.

This room was much smaller than Tatsue's bedroom. There was a bundle of sheets on the bed in the corner of the room, as if Mitaka was still sleeping. That was rare for him, who was slightly obsessed with routine and meticulousness. Tatsue sighed as she thought of this, and walked up to the bed.

She sat on the bed with a creaking sound, and said loudly as if she was pulling a prank or singing:

"How long do you plan to sleep, Mitaka? My darling sleepy little snake, if you don't wake up soon, an upset dragon might just bite off your head!"

Even so, she did not get a response. Tatsue had no other choice but to lift up the blanket. Mitaka was sleeping in the fetal position, completely oblivious to Tatsue going crazy beside him, and was breathing evenly and softly in his sleep.

Having run out of all other options, Tatsue took out her fan and started to fan him.

"Seriously, Mitaka, you're making me wait for you. Who do you think you are? You're even sleeping so deeply..."

As she said this, Tatsue inspected Mitaka's sleeping face intently. It had been a long time since she saw him without his glasses. He usually looked so cold and stern, but now that he was asleep his face was very innocent, and surprisingly cute.

She felt a ticklish urge in her.

"..."

Tatsue's heart started to beat rapidly. She slowly climbed on top of him, and put her face close to Mitaka's. Tatsue lowered her body until she was close enough to almost feel his breath, and she held that pose, waiting in silence.

"Mitaka..."

She caressed his hair and whispered. "I'm really... going to bite off your head."

“Oh, I’m really surprised that Tatsue has a cannibalism hobby.”

Mitaka suddenly opened his golden eyes and spoke as he looked at Tatsue. Tatsue immediately blushed all over and fell backwards.

“Mi – Mitaka! Get up if you’re already awake! You’re such a pervert!”

“Ah, Tatsue, can you please not yell so loud. My head hurts…”

Mitaka moaned and furrowed his brows as if he was really in pain. Tatsue immediately took back her irrational attitude and placed her hand on his forehead.

“Does your head hurt? Is it really serious, Mitaka? You don’t have to go to school if you’re not feeling well.”

“No –“

Mitaka shook her head. Although his expression still looked painful, he stood up and smiled in order to make Tatsue feel better.

“It’s not so serious that I can’t go to school. What should I say – it’s probably because I had a strange dream. I am more affected by dreams than normal people… but a headache from dreams usually doesn’t last a long time. Don’t worry.”

“Really? Is it really ok?”

Even so, Tatsue didn’t look relieved. Mitaka just casually replied affirmatively and took off his pajamas. Tatsue’s entire face blushed crimson as she watched Mitaka take off his clothes and exposed his naked white body.

“Mi – Mitaka?! Why are you taking your clothes off?!”

“Hmm? Aren’t we going to school? I need to change for that.”

“Even if you want to change, why are you doing that in front of a girl… seriously, I’m such an idiot. Why am I even worried about you?! Mitaka has always been an idiot!”

Tatsue suddenly ran away in a rage. Meanwhile, with a voice that would surely enrage Tatsue even more, Mitaka mumbled blankly:

“… Am I an idiot?”

They realized something was wrong by the time they reached the shopping street.

They got out of the subway station after getting on the subway from Tatsue’s house, and then rented a bicycle from the shop next to the station. Of course, it was Mitaka who was riding the bike. Tatsue sat side-saddle on the rack behind the bike seat. She said that she was wearing a skirt and that it would be very inconvenient and awkward to ride a bike. Mitaka was also her servant. He shouldn’t complain about serving his master like this.

Mitaka just agreed and nodded. Tatsue was simply afraid of falling off, and hugged his waist tightly.

“It’s so weird.”

Mitaka muttered lowly, puzzled. Tatsue was a bit confused and looked at Mitaka, then she tilted her head and took into account her surroundings.

“What’s wrong? Uh, what’s so strange?”

“Why isn’t anyone here?”

It was indeed very weird. It was almost unlike the bustling and busy shopping street they used to know. Tatsue didn’t notice it before, but there were nobody on the streets at all –

It was as if the entire town was still asleep, or rather, silent as death. All the

shops along the road had their steel rollers down. Those shopkeepers who usually hollered to their customers loudly, those office workers who commuted around the subway station, and the school students who were heading to school just like Tatsue… no one was here at all. There were no sounds, and all was quiet.

Tatsue furrowed her brows and felt very weird. She lifted up her head and looked at this empty world.

“Really… What is going on?”

No one was here. Mitaka suddenly scanned their surroundings, as sharp as a snake. His expression was very alarmed. Tatsue also jumped down from the bicycle after he stopped it. The morning air was very cold, and the bitumen road she stood on was frozen solid.

She couldn’t help but put her hand into Mitaka’s to seek some warmth. His elongated and elegant eyes, hiding behind his glasses, were shining with a very stern light. He said softly:

“Careful, Tatsue. I feel there’s something wrong.”

“Something wrong? Do you feel monsters are coming?”

Tatsue instinctively took out the black fan she used as her weapon, and prepared herself for a fight.

Contrary to his appearances, Mitaka was more than just an ordinary human. He was the descendent of a mythological clan of snakes. Compared to normal humans, his ability to sense monsters was far sharper.

Monsters were repulsive creatures that only existed to eat humans. They were mankind’s arch-nemesis. Even their exterior appearances were nightmarishly disgusting, and just one look at them would cause an evil chill to rise up in one’s mind. Even though Tatsue wasn’t an ordinary human either, she still didn’t want to meet those creatures.

“What’s going on?”

Mitaka looked very stern.

“These aren’t powerful monsters, but there are so many of them. How should I put them… it’s like the entire world is full of them – “

Mitaka paused, then continued in a low voice, his throat dry.

“Anyways, now isn’t the time for us to leisurely go to school anymore. Something extraordinary must have happened. I need to talk to Mitsuki and Mina about this strange situation.”

“… I understand. Let’s go to Mitsuki’s apartment then. I can figure out what’s going on by manipulating the air, but that would really exhaust my Apple’s power supply.”

Tatsue gave him a sign of assent as she said this, putting all her trust in him.

Mitaka never joked, and Tatsue always believed wholeheartedly in his intuitions. Something had definitely happened in this town. Moreover, compared to powerful monsters and to those non-humans with Greater Fragments, Tatsue and Mitaka weren’t much different from normal humans and couldn’t do anything. They could only seek help from powerful allies such as Mina and Mitsuki.

They quickly decided on their next move and got on the bike again, but Tatsue still felt an anxious sense of unease in her chest.

The sky was completely overcast and the morning blue sky was nowhere to be seen. Her mood also felt down. It was as if they were in the last act of a play, when the story had already ended and the curtains came down. It was a dead and gloomy sky.

Tatsue hugged Mitaka tightly from behind as she thought this.

“Hehehehe…”

A laugh could suddenly be heard.

Where - ?

There was no need to scan their surroundings anymore. When they realized it, someone was already sitting in front of Mitaka and Tatsue.

It was a girl who wore the Kannonsakazaki High School uniform and had a plain face. She had smooth and short black hair, and a dangerous light shone in her elongated and beautiful eyes.

This unknown girl was just sitting in the middle of the road as she giggled. Her legs were casually spread apart, and she was not looking at their direction.

Her face was full of a happy expression as she looked at the empty, death-like town.

"Tatsue."

Mitaka's voice was very nervous. Tatsue couldn't help but feel a chill heading down her back.

"Run away. This girl isn't human."

As if she heard Mitaka's whisper, the girl slowly stood up and put her hands behind her, then lazily looked towards them as if she didn't feel like doing anything. Her face was full of smiles, as if she was wearing a mask, and it make Tatsue feel an unprecedented anxiety.

"... Ha."

As if she was talking to herself, she mumbled with a gloomy and almost inaudible voice:

"Natsuko-san, I seem to feel the aura of a Greater Fragment, but it was a sickly little kid and one of our kin. I'm actually a bit disappointed."

"Oho, don't get too angry, Ame-chan."

There was a reply coming from behind them. They turned around, and saw that they were in front of the cafe that Tatsue and others often visited, that place famous for its chocolate sundaes - Indian Bar. The door was open, and a doll-like woman appeared.

That person - Tatsue remembered she was that cafe's owner. She didn't remember her name anymore. She was wearing inconspicuous clothing and an apron, looking very plain. She looked like there was a plastered fake smile on her face, just like that girl whom she called Ame-chan.

"Our duty is to kill any existence who dares to approach Kannonsakazaki High

School, be it human or monster. If we don't kill them just because you like them - "

"I understand. It would be more fun to do that. I've lived in the shadows till now. It is about time for the final battle. I can finally play to my heart's content, right?"

The woman and girl talked to each other with strange smiles on their faces, and completely ignored Tatsue and Mitaka who stood between them. Tatsue and Mitaka's escape paths were completely blocked off too. These two women looked completely inconspicuous, and they physically appeared very weak even though they were adults. Judging purely by appearances, Tatsue and Mitaka would definitely suffer if they fight with these two immortals.

What should they do? How would they be able to run away?

It was impossible to fight. They would undoubtedly be killed. It was not that easy to fight monsters and those immortals. Tatsue already felt this strongly when she got involved with the Eternity Institute. They would be killed instantly if they even relaxed for a little bit. Even if they put their entire minds into it, they would still be killed eventually as they ran out of energy. It was impossible to win. Humans could not win against monsters.

Even so, she didn't want to die so easily.

Tatsue opened her fan and made a fighting pose as usual.

Ame-chan noticed this. As if she was very excited, she stretched her hands out forward.

"Aha. A little bunny being hunted upon actually dares to threaten the hunter. Can I kill her, Natsuko-san?"

"You won't even leave any meat behind if I let you do it. No. I am... rather hungry."

The joints of the woman named Natsuko started to bend with a cracking sound. Then, as if the flesh all over her body were boiling underneath her skin, they all swelled up incredulously, and she became an alien monster in the blink of an eye. The clothes and shoes she wore also tore apart and scattered all around her. Tatsue and Mitaka stood there gaping in surprise.

Natusko's body, with black bands across her torso, started to harden and develop a carapace as if she was an insect. Her segmented limbs also started to stiffen with the movement of her muscles and ligaments. As if she was a samurai who put on his armor, her entire body swelled up to be as big as the store next to her. Having completed her metamorphosis, she gave out a strong oppressive feeling, making the ground and the air around her shake as if in fear.

Three feelers grow out of her forehead. It was a monster with a dark red light sparkling in her eyes...

"I am the King of Summer! I am the King of Insects! I am the Beetle, Minazuki Natsuko - I am a warrior of the metamorphosis kind, and my power will crush you all! Despair! Scream! Hurry and make it more entertaining! Here is where you will die! Food should make dying cries befitting of food! Let the predators feel the joy!"

Suddenly, a black hole appeared in Ame's hand, who was standing beside Natsuko and has been making a ruckus all this time. A pale green liquid squirted powerfully out of her hand. The liquid came out fast as a bullet and landed on the wall of the bookshop next to Tatsue, and instantly melted the material.

"Hehehehe."

The high school girl who squirted corrosive liquid from her hand looked very happy as she gazed at Mitaka and Tatsue, who were both pallid with terror. The girl started slowly:

"Well, I am an honor student in the special abilities department. Please call me darling Nagumo Ame-chan, the Poison Demon. My favorite ability is Sulfuric Rain. I will dissolve you until even your bones are gone!"

"I won't allow you to dissolve them."

The earth reverberated as Natsuko, in her hideous monster form, stepped forward. Her voice was the only thing that still remained the same.

"I am still very hungry!"

It was different from the confusion of being surrounded by predators. They were being met with a pincer attack by two monsters. The street was full of shops to their left and right, and Mitaka and Tatsue didn't have the ability to jump over these buildings. They could not escape. They could only do their best at defeating either Natsuko or Ame and run away.

"Tatsue, just forget about fighting them! It's a stupid idea!"

Mitaka said this in a low voice, but Tatsue pouted.

"But I don't think they will be so kind as to just let us run away!"

Heavy thuds came from behind them. Natsuko's giant torso was walking slowly towards them, approaching them casually and at ease. If this went on, then they have no choice but to face death. She was walking up to them slowly. She would stomp them into mincemeat. Tatsue and Mitaka didn't have the power to attack the monster, nor did they have a plan to defeat it.

Yes, this wasn't a fight, but a one-way hunt.

Their opponent had overwhelming advantages, and entertained herself by tormenting her puny and powerless prey. If Natsuko so much as changed her mind and decided to end this game early, then Tatsue and Mitaka would instantly die.

Even their courage to resist the monster was beginning to wither away as they looked at that incredulous giant, more monstrous than a monster. It was more perilous for them than a game between a cat and a mouse. How could they possibly fight back against a carnivorous monster as big as a building?

And then that person called Ame… She had rather strange abilities. Although she looked like an ordinary girl, they still would not be able to win against her.

“Hey hey.”

Someone patted Tatsue’s shoulder. Huh? Tatsue wasn’t expecting that at all.

She turned her head, and Ame was standing there giggling, as if she was in control of everything. She was definitely still standing in front of Tatsue just a minute ago. Did she have teleportation powers too?

“Woah!”

Out of reflex, Tatsue fluttered her fan and instantly disrupted the air in front of her, creating a small tornado. She named this ability after the katana passed down the Kuroki family as an heirloom – Dragon’s Breath. The tornado, or rather the storm that she created, instantly blew away her opponent. It wasn’t very destructive or lethal, but it was also very hard to dodge as it was invisible.

“Hehehehe.”

However, Ame easily dodged the attack from the storm. As if she only left a mirage as unchanging as the smile plastered on her face, Ame already returned to her previous position when Tatsue realized what was going on – she was facing them again.

“Ahahaha, so dangerous. Oho, you actually have rather interesting abilities!”

As if talking to herself, Ame stated those obvious facts without much thought.

“Sulfuric Rain vs Terrifying Storm? What’s this? I’m pretty sure some legends have a tale like this too. Oh? Something like the North Wind and the Sun? Then, then, let us create a new legend together!”

This person was a predator too. Tatsue understood this. She was a much more lively and flirtatious girl than Natsuko, who approached them from behind. However, Ame was not in any way less dangerous than Natsuko. She might even be more dangerous than the other woman.

A chilling spasm rose up along Tatsue’s back. She wasn’t someone who liked violence. She was just a simple girl who hated pain, hated seeing blood, and cared a lot about whether she was hurting other people. Tatsue didn’t like to fight monsters either. She was someone who only dared to imagine pain on herself or others, but never wanted to experience it.

“Tatsue.”

The person standing next to her said in a low voice. He was her childhood friend, and the person she loved the most – Mitaka. He was not human, and he still managed to keep a clear head in this situation and kept thinking calmly. He could even still let Tatsue feel his emotions towards her in his words.

“I don’t know what she is. I don’t know what is happening in this town and what’s that got to do with the school. I don’t want to know either. I don’t care about the fate of the world or a conspiracy on a cosmic scale – we aren’t powerful people who are related to those things. I’ve had enough of villains or warriors of justice, and I don’t want anything to do with them anymore.”

Tatsue could see her own terrified face reflected in his unique golden irises.

“And we’re not going to die either, right?”

Yes, they can’t die. How could they die? Tatsue’s existence had already collapsed once, and her body was no longer mortal. But there was a girl once upon a time, someone who still wanted to survive even if her hands were diced into innumerable pieces. And there was a bloodstained boy who once stood in front of Tatsue, who spread his arms to protect her life.

Her life, which she managed to extend till this day because of how hard she fought for it, was not going to be over!

Tatsue has a responsibility to keep living with her dignity intact.

“Tatsue. We’re going to fight now. Come here.”

She heard his words. Tatsue now had the resolve to keep living. Just like when they were back down in that disgusting Institute, those who will survive this would are the ones with the strongest resolve.

Tatsue clutched her fan tightly and nodded resolutely.

“What are you doing? You’re all whispering to each other?!”

A boiling liquid erupted out of Ame’s hand. The strong acid landed squarely at the electricity pole next to Tatsue and instantly melt it through. The pole collapsed together with the wires it ripped down. The electricity from them burst into countless sparks and fell towards Natsuko.

“Hold on, Ame-chan. I’m still here too… careful!”

Even though she said this, Natsuko still sounded rather calm. She moved her forelimbs a little and instantly smashed the wires and the pole. She did feel a little sizzle from the electricity, but there was no pain whatsoever.

Meanwhile, Ame didn’t seem concerned at all, and laughed loudly while

waving her hands around.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’ve never been good with working with others! Is that called ‘teamwork’ or something? Or is it ‘co-operation’? It doesn’t matter. I’m just not used to it.”

She said all that in a voice dripping with distain.

“But Natsuko-san… those two are completely ignoring me. They are just whispering to each other all the time. Urk, I’m really upset. Ame is really angry. I was like this before as well. Doesn’t matter if it was at school or at home, everyone, everyone… why is everyone ignoring me?! You are the ones who are rubbish! You are the idiots! Do you want to kick me out of your company? I am greater than all of you. You just need to praise me more and more.”

Ame became excited from her own words and her cheeks swelled crimson. She kept waving her limbs around and spurted sulfuric acid everywhere wantonly, dissolving everything around her.

“Ahaha! But I am not a melancholic girl who will just sit quietly in the corner of the classroom when you ignore me! I will completely crush this ugly world with the power of the Devil, and remake it into a world more impartial for me! The Last Judgment will be marvelous! I have finally been chosen by this fair world!”

She was saying something abnormal and incomprehensible. Tatsue and Mitaka didn’t know how to respond, either. The Last Judgment? A more impartial world? What did all that mean? They couldn’t understand that, but they could guess that Ame was originally an ordinary human who was very unhappy with how the world was run.

Then someone bestowed power upon her and poisoned her mind with certain ideas.

Perhaps that person – was their true enemy all along.

Ame stretched out her hand. Perhaps because she rarely smiled when she was still a human, she was not very good at the act… The smile on her face looked very grotesque.

“I am someone chosen by God!”

As she said this, a torrent of sulfuric acid poured towards Mitaka and Tatsue. Tatsue detected rage and an even deeper sorrow in Ame's tone, and Tatsue chose to dodge her attack – by moving forward.

The turgid liquid approached her as if it could burn through even the air itself. Tatsue twirled and turned the pitch black fan she held in her hands. Ame's words touched her more and more. Those were the words Tatsue used to speak. She wanted to be chosen by someone. She wanted to consider herself as unique, as deserving of praise. She worked so hard just for that. But...

There were no meanings behind that.

"Even if I'm not chosen by the likes of God -"

Reality was as clear as a play.

"I will be happy as long as I'm with someone who choose to love me."

The sulfuric acid that approached Tatsue as they twisted and turned with life suddenly froze, and completely stopped mid-air. Ame opened her eyes and, for the first time, looked like she was about to have a mental breakdown.

"Ah - this!"

The corrosive acid, infused with her endless vengeance, surged forward. Even Tatsue felt the scorching heat within it. The hatred it contained made Tatsue's mind feel restless as well.

But there was no way the acid was going to hurt Tatsue. Every drop flew past her uselessly.

"What's going on!? Stop this!"

Ame kept attacking, but no matter how much acid she sprayed, it was all useless.

This was the ability sealed into Tatsue's body, the manipulation of space unique to Melodia Noise Tear Song. She had also countered the incredible power exhibited by Unpleasant Counter-Current when Mitsuki turned into a fallen angel in the Eternity Institute. These feelings of hatred from Ame were not even worth of mentioning compared to the despise Mitsuki threw at Tatsue then. Both the desire for praise that Ame had, and the displeasure Ame felt towards other

people and the world, were truly too inconsequential in comparison.

"I don't know what kind of a person you were before."

Tatsue didn't feel sad. She just spoke her thoughts in a low voice.

"But no matter what kind of abilities you received, no matter if you were chosen by God or what... you will never grasp happiness if you heart does not change."

As if she was confessing to her father, who became mad due to his persistence towards his ideals - or as if she was confessing to a younger version of herself - Tatsue said with a genuine expression:

"Pitiful humans."

All expression disappeared from Ame's face. Her body shook uncontrollably. Her hands were clutched into fists, and sulfuric acid seeped out from between her fingers. Tatsue could not take her eyes away from Ame. She was just like how Tatsue had been before. Tatsue understood that kind of pain. It was as if no one needed her. It was a sad despair, in which she firmly believed she would leave no trace upon this world if she were to disappear.

"Ame-chan! Don't slow your attacks! She can't keep up her spatial manipulation for a long time! I can take over if you don't want to continue!"

Nastuko, who was behind Tatsue and Mitaka, seemed to sense how Ame's heart wavered. She suddenly attacked the duo, not giving them any time to rest. Tatsue yelled without hesitation. This woman was definitely not evil, either. It was only because she had been turned into a monster. If this was the final judgment - if this was the fair world they spoke of -

"I have absolutely no interest in those things!"

Tatsue then turned quickly to face Natsuko. She held her fan tightly, as if she

wanted to protect the person she loved, who was standing next to her. Resolve and an intent to kill burned in her eyes, as if she harbored a living fire.

“Ah – “

But such an expression only lasted briefly on Tatsue’s face, as Ame started to cry out sadly behind her.

“Stop! Natsuko-san, her target is – “

Natsuko ignored Ame. Her fly-like complex eyes were already crimson red. Her gigantic body started to move forward, and she rushed over to Tatsue as if she was going to trample her into the ground.

However, Tatsue didn’t look scared at all. Indeed, she wore a faint smile on her face.

“There were many things a dragon’s breath was said to be capable of throughout the legends in every culture. Some considered them able to stir up tornados, or to invoke mighty flames and scorch the earth. Others thought that a dragon’s breath turned living humans into sacks of poison, or that they spewed forth acid that could corrode everything – “

“Natsuko-san, run!”

Ame cried in a frenzy and sprayed out sulfuric acid everywhere with her hands, but she only managed to achieve the opposite of what she wanted. Neither Ame nor Natsuko were experienced fighters. Although Tatsue wouldn’t want to get too arrogant, she had indeed defeated monsters such as Mitsuki before – she felt rather assured of herself.

She certainly did not have mighty powers or an invincible capacity for destruction.

However, she could kill people even with a ribbon if she wanted to.

The differences between experience, knowledge, and preparation – those are the things that determine the outcome of battles.

The roiling sulfuric acid gathered in the air as if it was but candy floss. Tatsue observed her enemy as she controlled those droplets circling in the air.

She had no idea what kind of relationship existed between Ame and Natsuko.

They were probably quite close as the café was near Kannonsakazaki High School. She could instantly see the scene now. A sad high school girl who was not welcomed at school drinking her coffee in Natsuko's shop as a faint smile surfaced on her face.

Tears streaked down Tatsue's face.

Honestly, she still didn't like to fight.

"Dragon's – Breath!"

She expanded her ability to control space, and all the air around her started to move. The large amounts of sulfuric acid that Ame released started to build up around Tatsue – they glided and flew in the air according to Tatsue's will, then sprang towards Natsuko, who was about to run up to Tatsue to melee her into oblivion.

The acid instantly melted half of Natsuko's body and blew her away.

A dying wail started to echo around them. The thick stench of blood and Ame's shrieks could then be sensed. The ground was littered with pieces of meat and blood stains, and the shopping street was completely ruined. Black carapace cracked and shattered. Minazuki Natsuko, whose entire body had changed into a monster, exploded into a mist of blood, and instantly disappeared.

"Natsuko-san!"

Ame had a look of disbelief on her face and yelled in despair at Tatsue. Tatsue had killed someone Ame cared for deeply using her ability. Tatsue was really the worst, the most outrageous person ever.

Tatsue knew she used a despicable tactic. Her pride as the daughter of the most prominent financial empire in Japan instantly evaporated. She felt a deep sense of regret as a human being.

"Ah, ah – aaaah!"

Ame looked hopelessly for Natsuko everywhere. She then put her hands over her head and screamed.

"What on Earth did you do!?"

Ame's body disappeared again. Did she teleport again? Tatsue didn't know

what to do. She initiated Tear Song's ability to analyze the space around her to find Ame's location, only to find that Ame appeared to be underneath them.

"Below...?"

Before she understood what was going on, Ame erupted from the stone and bitumen of the road and flew out at them savagely. She had corroded the ground using the acid from her hands, and dug a tunnel using her power, allowing her to attack from below Tatsue.

It would have been a very powerful surprise attack.

Tatsue paled in surprise, and flew to her side at the last minute and barely managed to dodge the attack. She rolled on the ground and tried to stop the acid from pouring down. Ame was also yelling angrily at her direction, but everything was so loud, and she couldn't hear her clearly.

As Tatsue's gaze flickered, the frothing acids scattered away powerlessly. It was so sad and weak. Tatsue felt a tinge of guilt. She felt a silly and weak idea, that maybe she should let her opponent's attack work just a little. But she knew it would be meaningless to even consider these thoughts.

She had to kill her.

It would be as easy as squishing a bug or swallowing a piece of meat.

She had to do it.

As if they were ice blocks exposed under the scorching sun, all the shops around her were starting to melt. Tatsue just quietly looked at the girl before her. Her attacks couldn't reach Tatsue, and Ame started to scratch her face in anxiety. Tatsue stared straight at her and said:

"I'm sorry."

Ame could have been happy. However, in order for Tatsue to survive, she had to kill Ame here. It was justified personal defense. Excuses such as 'the opponent is a monster' were meaningless.

This was her punishment. Sin and punishment were just, but humans would never receive happiness in a fair manner. Tatsue had also started to hate this world full of evil.

"Please - die."

Tatsue made up her mind and flapped her fan forward.

The isolating membrane that came from Manipulation of Space disappeared. Ame had unleashed countless attacks at it, without managing to pierce it. Although her body was immune to the acid, the overflowing chemical covered the skin around her eyes and her face, making it look like Ame was crying.

Tatsue said again softly, facing Ame directly:

"I'm sorry."

"...?"

Suddenly, as if she felt something odd, Ame opened her eyes.

"Huh?"

She tilted her head and scanned her surroundings. As she looked anxious, she started to mumble:

"There was someone else here... Where did that boy go?"

The moment Ame's gaze left her, Tatsue's hands suddenly punched forward, mimicking the action Ame had made when she attacked. However, there were no sulfuric acid pouring from Tatsue's hand.

Just a black snake coming out of her sleeve -

She used the ability to manipulate space and made a hole in her protective membrane, with the black snake's slender body flowing into it... Ame noticed the Snake and *screamed*. But it was too late, as the reptile flew into Ame's wide open mouth without hesitation.

"Gulp?!"

Ame instantly twisted her body and leaned backwards. Her hands flew to her throat, and she started to struggle. Sulfuric acid poured out of her hands and dripped to the ground, evaporating the earth into nothingness. Ame rolled around, screaming at the top of her lungs. She kicked her legs, looking like she was in excruciating pain.

"Urgh!? Ur...Ughn!!"

As if some hidden disease was acting up within her body, Ame moaned and put her hands to her face, as her body contorted. Her stomach could not contract due to the forced distention caused by the alien creature within it. Her abdomen bulged up disturbingly, and something long and thick was wriggling beneath her skin.

Tears welled up in Ame's eyes. She bit her lip hard as she endured the pain, and blisters formed as she moaned.

She was really suffering.

Tatsue stood up slowly and lowered her head, looking at Ame.

She could still vaguely see the tail of the black snake within the moaning girl's mouth. She was struggling painfully. Tatsue looked away as the black snake slithered into the esophagus from her mouth and gnawed through the stomach, moving everywhere within the abdominal cavity.

"... What should I do?"

Ame was sweating profusely and her eyes, which were looking this way, already had dilated pupils. Tatsue sighed. She shuddered just from the thought of how painful and disgusting it must be to swallow a black snake whole.

Ame's shoulders started to shake with a gurgle.

The snake's tail had now completely disappeared within her throat. Ame's eyes were full of hatred as she looked sideways at Tatsue, being unable to stand up due to her full abdomen.

"You... You bastard!"

Ame spat out those words one by one, her voice full of pain.

"I curse you... someone like you, won't be forgiven..."

Yes, Tatsue agreed. Being hurt, feeling the pain, and being cursed for it - that was truly annoying. Therefore, Tatsue hated to fight, and abhorred this destiny forcing them to battle each other. The wounds they received would never heal. Blood would seep out of their hearts and gradually dye them crimson red.

Tatsue lamented her own sins as she watched Ame's body tense up. She let out a long breath.

"Mitaka."

She showed an expression of fake kindness, then followed with mean words: "Let her be free."

There was a disgusting squelch. Blood seeped out between Ame's lips. Her hands were on her chest and she rubbed her skin continuously - then she stopped moving. Mitaka probably chewed a hole in her heart.

It was Tatsue who wanted to do this. It was Tatsue who killed her.

Although it was her first time ending a life, she might have been forever denied Heaven because of this.

Tatsue lifted her head and looked up at the sky while standing before the corpse of the girl.

She told herself that she would not feel sorrow even if she were sent to the depths of Hell, as long as she remained with her beloved Snake.



Saibara Mitsuki furrowed her brows. No, it was the Greater Fragment called

The Weakest who had changed into Mitsuki's form - no, that was incorrect as well. Her name was Moon, though she had succumbed to the siren song of the Greater Fragment within her, and had completely fallen under its sway, becoming the Jealous Queen. She looked very unhappy, and her face was full of an annoying expression. She muttered softly:

"Useless trash."

Her words were filled with a rage completely incongruous with Mitsuki's gentle image, for the girl she borrowed the form of wouldn't even kill a bug. Moon stood at the top of an electrical pole in silence and bathed in the light of the dawn, looking out over the township of Kannonsakazaki. Her gaze pierced through the school building and looked out as the battle in the distant shopping district gradually ended. She reached up and pressed down on the hat that the wind threatened to blow off, and muttered to herself:

"... The Poison-Demon Nagumo and the Beetle Minazuki were defeated so easily. Their opponents weren't shapeshifters or other powerful entities with abilities - they weren't even Greater Fragments. They were just a defenseless version of Melodia Noise and a Snake."



There was no emotion in her voice, not even a sliver. There was no sorrow from knowing her subordinates had failed – had died. There was also absolutely no intention to pray for them in the afterlife.

She simply felt a sense of disgust from the bottom of her heart. Her mind was so full of rage that she even started to feel dizzy.

Moon sighed and saw an incredible red light coming out of Nagumo Ame's dead body, which flew towards the direction of the Kannonsakazaki High School.

"Mmm, never mind. I have never expected much of other people. As long as no unrelated folks approach the school, go and do as you wish... All ye chosen ladies and gentlemen!"

Moon cackled, as she gazed fixedly towards the school. The school was enveloped in a carmine light in the rising sun, as if it was an over-ripe apple. And in the middle of all that, at a spot sparkling with a blood-red sheen due to her will alone, hordes of monsters gathered there and moved restlessly.

Monsters. Monsters.

Due to Moon's ability to alter her own body, her sight had also improved exponentially. She gazed at these monsters gradually approaching the school and greedy seeking out light. They were not people like Nagumo Ame and Minazuki Natsuko, whom Moon had gathered under her wing after using Modification of the Flesh to make them into monsters.

"... Mushi."

Moon made a mocking snicker from her nose and stretched out her arms, looking down upon the entire world. As if no one else could understand her, she quietly recounted the contents of myths on her own:

"Little Mushi became monsters - but God showed no signs of resistance. The world wouldn't be able to maintain itself anymore... Seriously, don't joke with me. How can we welcome the end like this?"

As if Moon was chanting, she roared out at the world approaching its end:

"I will become the hero! The hero of the entire world! Everyone will praise my name. The future will become a beautiful world where people will praise me endlessly for all eternity!"

As if she was drunk, she yelled in madness. Then she suddenly bent over and pulled her hair out of disgust.

“I’ve started to talk to myself again… Ahaha, ahahahaha! Who am I trying to impress? I killed Ume-chan! My own hands killed Joker too! Nothing matters anymore! I don’t care if none of those people praise me! The entire world will praise me, sooner or later~~ Ahaha – Ahahahahahaha!”

Moon started to laugh loudly as if she was mad. As if that jealous and lonely queen finally obtained praise from the Mirror of Truth about her beauty, a self-satisfied smile surfaced on her face.

“Ahahaha! It’s useless to feel regret! You bastards! Your points of view are too perfect – you are too worthy of envy, so it’s your fault that I’m jealous of you!”

In the middle of the world, in the middle of the Apple sparkling with a dark red sheen, Usagawa Rinne did not respond at all. She only rested within the glass coffin, and simply waited for her prince to arrive.

She dreamed.

It was a dream of the past.

“…”

It was a distant dream from a long long time ago, and its memory was already vague and fuzzy. It was when Guriko was still called Yono. She was still a human back then. She could still taste food. She could still feel stuffy when the summers became too hot. She could still cry when it got too cold in winter. This was from a long long time ago, when she still had her body and heart.

Was it Mom?

She had wanted to ask something since a long time ago.

Was it Dad?

Those two travelers who rescued her from the Mushi and travelled with her – or had Guriko wanted to go with them? – and who had finally entrusted their Apples to her and disappeared.

Kudan and Kirigirisu.

She didn't know whether those were their original names. Maybe those were just names they had casually made up. Guriko wasn't interested in their names anyways, and she didn't deliberately seek them out. What Guriko wanted to ask them was simply a painful question that she could not articulate. Just that one question.

Are you –

How long did she spend travelling with them?

– My Dad? Or my Mom?

Yono was a child who had been discarded. She was a child who no one wanted, who had just been found outside the village. It would have been fine as long as Yono was the only unfortunate one. No one considered her family, and no one wanted to be her friend. Perhaps no one even considered Yono a fellow human.

Those two people, the travelers Kudan and Kirigirisu, were the first and only people who had ever helped Yono, had called her by name, patted her head, talked about all sorts of things with her, fussed over her health, and taken care of her when she fell sick.

Therefore, poor Yono had a delusion. She logically started to question the warmth those people gave her. Yono felt no one should be giving her this much kindness without a cause, that there must be a reason behind it which forced them to be so nice to her.

Guriko thought of this hard, becoming more and more suspicions, though in the end, she just became very confused.

She endlessly pursued the reason behind their kindness towards her, and she finally came up with this question:

“You…”

Guriko screamed in pain in her dream, wanting to prevent Yono from asking that question. She couldn’t ask such a question. It would hurt other people. Also, if she understood true loneliness, then she would sink into absolute despair.

However, in her dream, Yono ignored Guriko’s screams and asked in a small voice:

“Are you my Mom? Are you my Dad?”

She wanted to believe that she was not alone no matter what, even if no one wanted her, even if they discarded her. She must have had a real family somewhere. They had just had to discard her because of some special reasons, but they would definitely come and take her back sometime soon. They would actually love Yono. Yes, it was a delusion – but if she didn’t cling to this delusion, then she would definitely crumble.

She thought Kudan and Kirigirisu would definitely be her parents. She felt they were similar to her. However, they showed a sad expression and shook their heads.

Huh? Yono was confused. She had been almost completely convinced they were her parents. For a long time, she’d held onto that belief, thinking that this must be how it was. Yono believed firmly in this despite the lack of evidence.

That was sad. Even if they lied to her, Yono still wanted to nod as she listened to these sweet words.

Yono cried. She had waited on her own. She had endured betrayal on her own. Then she had cried. It had been a long time ago since she last cried. The last time she cried was when the Mushi killed her and made her an inhuman existence.

Kudan softly said something towards Yono, who was crying.

She couldn’t remember the details anymore. The only thing she could firmly recall was something he’d said.

True loneliness –

True loneliness was perhaps not to be a man, but to be a monster.

Yono-chan, do you remember what I told you about heaven and reincarnation? When someone dies, their soul will leave the body and become a completely different individual in their next life. They will keep living somewhere on this world for all eternity. That is reincarnation. Heaven is regarded as some happy utopia somewhere, and the souls of the dead would live there forever. That was it.

But both versions were simply inventions made to lessen our anxiety towards death.

Death is terrifying. It is scary for our own lives to disappear. Humans are scared of the unknown. We feel restless towards the unknown, and we dislike thinking of such concepts. We consumed the fruit of knowledge back in the distant past and gained our wisdom, then we foolishly proceeded to imagine what might happen after death. But that was the best we could do. If this is the punishment towards humans for gaining wisdom, then God is truly too mean-spirited. God made all of humanity aware of their death penalty from the moment they were born.

It was terrifying. No one had experienced death. We could only imagine what it was like, since we can never experience it. However, the objective evaluation was simply the complete disappearance of the entirely of our existence. This was the worst situation for creatures like us, something we simply could not be optimistic about.

We made up the concepts of ‘soul’, reincarnation, and Heaven to appease this fear. It was a delusion that our soul would remain even if we die, and that we can exist forever.

What is the soul, then? I believe it is the process of thought itself. ‘Thought’ is neither the body nor the brain. It is the basic unit that constructed the concept of ‘me’. It is only a concept, but it became the pillar of ‘my’ existence because it is only a concept.

Your face still looked like it was full of questions from listening to me. You will understand when you become an adult.

Anyways, the phenomenon of ‘death’ wasn’t simply damage to the body or to the brain. You can consider it as the end of thought. No matter what part of the body stops functioning, as long as ‘I’ am still thinking, it is proof enough that ‘I’ am still alive.

Therefore, rather than considering Heaven, reincarnation and rebirth delusions, they could be considered possible, actual existences.

Heaven is simply ‘me’ maintaining ‘my’ appearance and eternally thinking. Reincarnation, on the other hand, is when ‘I’ became another ‘me' and kept thinking in that new state. With regard to reincarnation, it is safe to assume that the ‘me’ who dies completely disappears. The initial ‘me’ would exist within the ‘me’ who was born again – no, it would simply be that ‘I’ have completely forgotten all memories of the previous life. Objectively speaking, the initial ‘me’ has not died, but simply cannot remember.

Reincarnation is truly an interesting concept.

However – the truth was that heaven and reincarnation were all delusions. ‘I’ will completely disappear upon death and become absolute nothingness. Even if we can briefly feel the joy of Heaven or reincarnation, we will still greet the end sooner or later, and face ‘my’ death.

Many legends hint at the annihilation of the world at the very end. Neither Heaven nor reincarnation were considered to be truly eternal, hinting towards the fact that humans will die sooner or later. Monsters, malevolent gods or demons, will be the ones who shall destroy the world. That is what I believe.

How lonely. It won’t be the ‘me’ who was already died.

I must be killed, even if I am not a monster –

“…”

Gankyū Eguriko startled awake and jumped up in a hurry, looking all around her. She didn’t understand what was going on around her at all, therefore she

looked everywhere as if she was a terrified little animal, and finally lowered her head.

“I… fell asleep?”

“Oho, you’re awake, Guriko-chan!”

She woke up in an apartment. It was a small room measuring only four-and-a-half tatamis. It was Mina’s room. This place was extremely messy. There were empty dishes, dirty clothes, and dead potted plants littered all over the floor. Guriko was sleeping in a corner of the room, wrapped in blankets in this space filled with all sorts of trash. Mina was wearing a set of extremely wrinkled pajamas, and she lowered her head and looked at Guriko.

A reddish light was seeping through the windows. It looked to be early morning. It was rather odd that there was no birdsong, but this was not the time to be thinking of these things. How did she fall asleep?

“Mina, how did Gu – Gu – Waaah?!”

Guriko suddenly couldn’t see anything anymore. She fell backwards and knocked her head against the wall. Mina seemed to have thrown something at her. Guriko blushed as she took those things off her face, realizing that it was Mina’s discarded clothes that covered her eyes.

Mina started to change her clothes, completely ignoring Guriko. She made no move to cover up her body, nor did she want to cover up Guriko’s young, androgenous body. They were both girls, and there was nothing to be embarrassed about, but Guriko still moved her gaze away slightly.

Mina made a big yawn and mumbled as if she was still half asleep:

“Stop being so anxious. I’ll tell you everything in detail. Rather… I want you to explain some things to me. You suddenly fainted when you met up with Mitsuki and me, and you haven’t woken up since then. You were covered in blood, and you probably lost a lot of blood too.”

Mina quickly finished changing. Her unbraided hair casually spread out behind her and she started to brush it. Looking at Mina’s leisurely pose, Guriko suddenly sat up.

“I was fighting Melodic Noise, Fear Song, and I defeated her. Then I went to help Rinne. What happened then? Suddenly, there were Mushi everywhere. And then… Single Room and Poison Catastrophe – woah!?”

As if the other woman thought she was being too annoying, there were more clothes thrown at Guriko’s face. Guriko blushed all the way up to her ears as she protested:

“Answer me seriously, Sterilization Disinfection! If you don’t do as I say, then I’m gonna gouge out your eyeballs!”

"You're so annoying... I have low blood pressure. I'm putting this out here. If you are not in that monster form, then you are always weaker than me. So watch yourself when you speak to me!"

Guriko threw a spoon towards her without hesitation. Mina's ability was to destroy all her opponents without regard to barriers or any such concept. A gust of cold wind blew past them, bringing the scent of flowers like those cheap deodorants sold at the roadside. Guriko didn't feel any heavy impact.

"Ack... cough cough. What is this? Are you an idiot?!"

Guriko was choked by some flowery scent as she coughed. What was this stupid woman trying to do...? Guriko coughed so much that tears came out of her eyes. She finally shut up as socks and shorts were thrown on her face.

"Alright alright... hurry up and put on some clothes yourself. Stop looking like a savage kid. You are a girl after all, and you should pay some attention to your appearance."

Guriko finally noticed her clothing was all ripped up after Mina told her off, and her body was completely covered in blood. Guriko's body had swollen up when she became that crimson red monster, and her clothing had been torn apart because of that. Although she was not completely naked, she was still in an embarrassing state.

Guriko obediently took off her clothing, but still got angry due to Mina's words and furrowed her brows.

"... I'm not a girl. I'm a savage kid!"

"Ok ok, do you really like to put yourself down this much?"

Mina made a snorting laugh as if she thought of Guriko as an idiot. Her brows also came up. Guriko was really an annoying girl.

But was she putting herself down? Yes, she was. What Mina said was hard to stomach, but it was right. Guriko felt inferior because she was a monster. Other people had told her numerous times that ‘it should be fine if you’re the only unfortunate one.” She felt she was an inferior being compared to all the people around her.

That was not true. The gentle woman and youth who had treated her as a normal human being were not with her anymore. Guriko didn’t behave as she usually did. She lowered her head and started to cry while hugging the clothes she took off.

It was so strange. She was so soft and weak.

“Ah, um –”

Mina looked like she didn’t know what to say. She quietly plaited her braid gently next to Guriko and smiled.

“Sorry. I’ve always been a woman with a sharp tongue… don’t pay too much mind to it.”

“…”

Guriko wiped at her eyes and suddenly smiled. Her expression then returned to her usual coldness.

“Seriously, you’re such a gloomy woman. You got white hairs at such a young age because you have a bad personality.”

“What did you say? You bastard brain.”

“… You are a useless nurse who can’t even take care of your daily life. You’re just someone useless who’s drinking all the time.”

“You don’t have any capacity to take care of your daily life either! Besides, I am a good nurse!”

“Who knows? I seem to remember you got plenty of people killed because of medical accidents. No, you outright killed them. You should be apologizing properly to the relatives of the victims, you murderess nurse.”

“You little bastard… There are some things you should never say to other people. I really shouldn’t have done that. I shouldn’t have worried about an ungrateful brat like you! Hurry and repay my kindness! How can there be kids as nasty as you? You are truly horrible!”

“You are the horrible one. It’s disgusting. I should be fine even if you don’t worry about me. Stop feeling all sympathetic, you idiot. I’m gonna contract your idiot virus and become an idiot too, idiot.”

“Ah, you two are really good friends!!”

As if throwing more wood on the fire between the two who were already yelling at each other, the people appearing before the open door giggled.

Mina and Guriko quieted down immediately. They both felt they were regarded as idiots. The two of them narrowed their eyes and looked towards the door. Guriko would usually have instantly rebuked anyone who said Mina and her were friends. However, when they saw who were standing at the door, both of them just gaped, unable to say anything. They then yelled out their visitors' names out loud immediately.

"Poison Catastrophe… Single room…"

It was the odd duo they had wanted to forget, but had never quite managed to.

The tall foreign woman with green hair and dark eyes.

The short boy of an unknown ethnicity, with hair bright red as flames and cute incisor teeth.

They were Poison Catastrophe Breaksun Hanselmine and Single Room – Nikuyama Kajiri. They had been their comrades during the battle with Melodia Noise Tear Song, and had collaborated with and helped them out – they were not good friends, but they were not outright enemies. More than just the incredible feeling of oddity, they felt like they could space out even in the middle of the battlefield. They were completely detached from the tension of the battle. They were really strange people.

These two people – Breaksun and Kajiri – walked slowly into the room and sat down as if no one else was in the room. They looked at Mina and Guriko. Mina shrugged slightly.

"Right – where should we start explaining? I met up with them as soon as you collapsed. Single Room thought I should leave the school as soon as possible, then he carried you on his back and ran fast as lightning to my apartment. At least thank him a bit. I thought it would be fine if we left you there."

"We left the school…?"

Guriko ignored Mina's tone of voice and stared at Kajiri with a look of blame in her eyes.

“Rinne was still in the school! Why would you say something like that… Huh? Sin-Single Room?”

He opened his eyes and furrowed his brows with an obvious look of complaint.

“Is he doing ok?”

“Hmm?”

Kajiri looked very serious. He lowered his head and sat on the ground cross-legged. He looked quite sick, actually. No, his face looked like that of a corpse. His breathing was also very shallow and his cheeks were shrunken. He looked to be in a great deal of pain. It had been a long time since they ended the ferocious battle in the school – what had happened to his body in this short duration of time?

He was the final hope for Rinne to return to how she was before. He was also a friend who fought against Melodia Noise “Tear Song with them. She wasn’t very used to calling him her friend – and she didn’t understand the concept either – but at least they took care of each other.

She suddenly had a repulsive premonition.

“Why does this feel as heavy as death?” She said.

“Heavy as death? Doesn’t this feel even heavier than death?”

He giggled as if it was very fun and unconsciously spoke some words with mysterious implications. Kajiri laughed, and then suddenly became serious again. The pupils in his black eyes stared at them all. Mina crossed her legs next to the low table. Breaksun looked like she might not have heard him at all, and kept wobbling her head.

Guriko, on the other hand, noticed Kajiri’s self-deprecating attitude.

“What’s wrong, Single Room? You look very odd.”

He had always been a boy with a belief that he would not give up, whose looks were incongruous with his personality. He was similar to Guriko. He still looked like he didn’t fit anywhere. He was a slightly shy and very sensitive child, but his heart was very weak –

It wasn't like she felt close to him. She just felt bad that that he, an existence

so close to God, could be bothered like this.

Just as she vaguely realized it wouldn't help to think like this, Kajiri yawned loudly, and mumbled:

"Ahh, such a strange bastard. It's really a bastard. Damn it, shit, this super bad. Do you understand now, Guriko?"

"I don't understand you at all, and don't you call me Guriko!"

Eguriko rolled up her sleeves in front of Kajiri and pouted with an annoyed expression all over her face - Breaksun smiled and tilted her head in a nonchalant way:

"Kajiri has been like this for a while. His words are way sharper than usual these days. It's really annoying... is he starting to think about girls?"

"Please ignore everything she says. Anyways -"

As if he finally gave up, Kajiri tilted up his head and looked up at the ceiling.

"Everything is horribly wrong."

"So... what exactly do you want to say?"

They couldn't understand what he was trying to say at all. When they asked him, he looked lost, and remained silent as if he was afraid. His face looked extremely tired, and now there was also a shade of despair in his expression. Just what exactly had he come to realize? Eguriko wanted him to tell her the truth, yet at the same time wanted him to stay silent like this.

Her chest felt constricted.

She was anxious, uneasy, and couldn't calm herself down.

Kajiri waved his hand as he looked at Eguriko, who was staring at him. He moved his crossed legs slightly.

"Mmm... what is it? I could say everything right now, but you won't believe me so easily. Besides, even if we don't know the actual situation, we're fine to just stay here."

It was like he was talking to himself. Eguriko still didn't know what he was saying at all.

"Hey, stop pretending you're so smart and all and explain yourself. I've got a rash personality. Why did we have to leave the school and leave Rinne behind? I don't understand that at all!"

"Oh? Ahh... that was easy. Look."

Kajiri stood up very seriously and opened the window, looking at the situation outside. The red dawn shone into the room - no.

"What's going on?"

A red dawn is a meteorological phenomenon only present during the short period of time after sunrise. However, the sun rose a long time ago. She looked at the clock to make sure of the time. It was definitely already 7 am.

Although it was already well into the morning, the world was still dyed red.

Everywhere she could see was full of a red light. The red beams of light danced and fluttered in the air, and disappeared in the heart of the radiance. The crimson light increased in strength and moved as if it possessed life, illuminating the entire world. This red river... this radiance that rivaled the sun swallowed everything.

What... was this?

Eguriko's cheeks were also dyed red from the light, and the haphazardly placed things in the room cast deep shadows under the radiance of the bright red light. It was as if it was something ominous - the mood was very terrible.

It was as if this was made of blood. Seriously, it was a bloody shade of red.

It was as if the entire world had been dyed with blood. It was disgusting. Eguriko immediately averted her gaze.

"What's going on? What's up with this red?"

Eguriko become rather lost due to surprise and horror. Kajiri said softly:

"The color isn't the problem. That shiny stuff is the actual danger."

Kajiri showed his incisor teeth and looked at the horrifying crimson light sideways. He then closed his eyes.

"Hmm, it's too bothersome to explain everything in detail to you. I'll just talk

about the important parts. I just analyzed this red light using Single Room's ability. I am not as perfect as Tear Song when it comes to analyzing space - but my ability lends towards investigation, too. Anyways, I read into the light, and the 'definition' of your friend is in the center of it all!"

Melodia Noise

Single Room had the power to change any form and concept in this world just from describing something. He possessed the power of Genesis. He was the mage closest to God in this world, and he could change any 'definitions'. At the same time, he had the power to decipher the 'definitions' of this world. Eguriko found it hard to imagine just what kind of state he exists in.

If this entire world were to be compared to a game, then he was the mage who could control – and change – the game’s rules.

Just what had Single Room, Kajiri, deciphered?

"Mmm, I'll briefly explain the truth. That red light is the root of all our lives."

"I don't understand."

She couldn't understand anything when faced with these riddle-like words. She'd never be able to understand these super hard stuff. What made Eguriko really angry was that her grades at school were also terrible, and her memory was also bad.

"Mmm..."

Kajiri's face was full of an annoyed expression, and he scratched his face as he sighed.

"Um - ah, hmm, well, let's regard that light as the existence of God."

"God?"

Breaksun instantly reacted to that term. She probably wasn't listening properly before anyways. She brought her hands together as she turned towards the window, and smiled happily.

"Indeed, there are many places in the world that naturally regarded dawn and dusk as God. Oh? But this light isn't from the dawn right now. Ahhhhh?! My God!"

"Listen properly if you don't understand. Stop mumbling over there."

As if he was chewing on an insect, Kajiri's facial expression was a very irritated one. He lifted up his face towards Eguriko and Mina's faces, who were looking at him with complete incomprehension. They both looked like they were idiot students who had a very poor capacity to understand anything. Kajiri had a lost expression and couldn't help but sigh.

"Urk. There are so many questions anyways. Why don't you just swallow this fact and remember that this light is God. We will all become that light if we die and get absorbed by that God. This gathered red light is life force of the dead."

Eguriko looked outside the window once again. It was a fantastical landscape. Swathes of crimson red fell like they were a part of a comet belt. Were those the lives of people who had died somewhere?

She couldn't help but shiver as she thought of this. If this was true, then right now, at this very instant - innumerable people were actually losing their lives, thick as rain drops, and their lives were absorbed by God.

"But -"

Mina gave out a very tough question as she wore a serious expression on her face.

"I never knew that this was the construct of the World. Why is God sucking away our souls with such eagerness - no, sucking away our lives? Why is He absorbing our lives?"

"These are but the final throes of the dying God."

Kajiri pouted and mumbled as he looked repulsed. Facing his funny act and the lines he delivered with it, the other three burst into roaring laughter.

"Why are you laughing, you bastards... I'm not joking. This is really bad. God is already on the verge of death right now. If God were to die, the entire world would face the same fate at the same time and die with Him."

"... Why?"

Kajiri shifted his eyes away and also shifted the topic of the conversation as Eguriko questioned him.

"Mmm... well, I'll explain it if you are so interested in this. After all, it's best not

to think anything right now. You just need to remember and understand this current situation, Anyways, this God, on the verge of death, is currently absorbing the lives of the humans and animals that keep reincarnating and cycling within this world. He can barely keep Himself alive with that. That is the current situation. Every one of us is just a split part of God. If we approach the school and get close to the body of God Himself, then we will be swallowed as well."

"???"

She still could not remember what he meant. Eguriko did not understand the definition of God at all. Maybe it was because she was like a monster. They would die immediately if they approached the school, and their souls would be sucked away once they die, and that was because God was almost dead - that was roughly what she heard, and she still did not understand this at all.

"Mmm, anyways, just remember, something horrible will happen if we approach Kannonsakazaki High School. That is it. We will die immediately as soon as we get close enough to it. Moreover, perhaps the surrounding areas of the school was already full of monsters."

"Monsters?"

His explanation could not keep up with the speed of the others' questions. She could not understand at all why there were monsters appearing. Monsters exist in the narrow cleft between Hell and Earth, and the rare times that they showed themselves were all to consume humans and they were mankind's arch-enemy. They were creatures of evil that Eguriko had fought against and slew numerous times.

What do these animals have to do with the current situation?

"Um -"

Kajiri mumbled in a low voice with anxiety:

"It's because - God is being eaten by those hordes of monsters."

Even if he said that was the reason, she couldn't acknowledge it either. Guriko couldn't understand this at all.

Mina was also half-cooked when it came to it, and she made a silly laugh from her nose:

"So even God Himself is currently getting eaten by the likes of monsters. Is that so?"

"Ah, you're laughing again. Don't laugh, bastard. These monsters are swelling up at an unbelievable rate, and they have all gathered in the school building and are greedily gnawing away at God!"

"Gnawing away at God? Isn't God that omnipotent and omniscient, all-powerful existence?"

That seemed to be Breaksun's Western views, but this time Kajiri laughed at her.

"There is no such thing as an absolutely immortal being. Even God can die... No matter what, monsters are enemies beyond the realm that God can control in this silly world. God arrived here with the knowledge that He will die. He is currently trying His best not to get eaten or killed by those bastards."

Kajiri opened his surprisingly clear eyes wide and continued speaking as he met everyone's eyes:

"This is Armageddon. The war between God and monsters has continued from the dawn of time till now, and it's finally time for the last battle. Our bodies will be pulled into this too... because we are all parts of God."

"..."

Eguriko didn't know what to say - she became very unsettled. She seemed to feel that Kajiri hadn’t explained some fundamental things. He deliberately mixed up the truth and simply talked about the current situation. She couldn't accept or understand this. She felt very restless and ill at ease.

Although she knew he was tricking her, she could not recognize his lies.

Indeed, death was gradually approaching. Right now was the moment when they had to make a decision, and the crisis was so near that no one could avoid it any more. The sense of crisis and the repulsion made her incredibly anxious.

She wanted to know the truth that Kajiri was hiding from her. She wanted to

know the truth. She would feel much better if she knew this, but she was somewhat scared as well. She was afraid that it was a terrifying truth that she wouldn't be able to accept. If only she had a machine that wouldn't have doubts to anything, and could smash all problems that appear in front of her. How happy she would be if she could live like that.

Two different kinds of emotions mixed together in Eguriko and kept conflicting with each other. Kajiri continued talking with a fiery light in his eyes:

"But there are ways to completely shatter this crazy situation."

He continued speaking these unbelievable words:

"At the same time - there are ways to save your friend."

"Rinne?"

Eguriko's expression softened due to what Kajiri said. There was hope. There was still hope. There was perhaps a miracle that could overturn this despairing dead end that they have arrived at without knowing what was going on.

"But... um, Guriko, it's best if you think everything through before you come to a decision."

He took the crucifix that he had hanging off his neck and pointed the sharp end towards her throat. Kajiri then declared:

"Would saving your friend really help her?"

"...?"

What did that mean? Saving her would be helping her. She pitied her friend, who had been killed and made into a living corpse. She didn't understand the concept of friendship before, but she could not just stand aside and watch as someone as gentle and pitiable as Rinne suffer from misfortune.

But - But -

What if Rinne didn't want anyone to save her? What if Eguriko took her away from her happiness by 'saving' her?

No, no, what was she thinking? There was no way Rinne wouldn't want to be saved from such a dire situation.

She wanted to save her.

Kajiri shrugged as he looked at Rinne, who appeared to be both making up her mind and deep in thought.

"Urk, take your time to think this through, Poisoned Apple. Your duty is to protect Her."

Kajiri uttered this incredible name as he stabbed at his own abdomen with the crucifix without hesitation. It was so rapid. No one could stop him.

The splattering mist of blood immediately scattered, and stuck to the walls and the tatami as if it was a living creature. This was the process of 'feeling' something, the first stage of Single Room using his abilities, this enormous Fragment closest to God. He had begun to decipher the 'definitions' of this world to its minutest detail, and change it according to his will. It was his omnipotent power of Genesis.

"Welcome to my room... Urk, argh, so disgusting."

All the colors around him suddenly disappeared. Kajiri gathered his swelling blood into the center of his palm. That redness, which gave out a faint light, gradually solidified and became four stones.

"This is a RPG. My role is that of the 'king'. The king who gave the legendary sword that could defeat the dragon to the brave adventurer. How does it sound, adventurers? Do you dare to hold this sword in your hands, and go forth to save the world?"

Eguriko and Mina looked at each other. The legendary sword that could save the world? The way to save the world and save God? Just with these red gems that Kajiri produced? These inorganic minerals sparkled with a startling light, as if they were solid drops of blood. What kind of power resided in these things?

Kajiri laughed as if he was playing a trick on them, and placed the gemstones on the bed and started to play with them.

"It's up to you to decide whether you want to join this game. However, if you decide to join, then you must have an iron resolve. This is a game at the absolute hardest difficulty. Your enemies are countless monsters. You will receive little to no help. Moreover, we are already in the countdown to the end of the world."

The boy named Single Room only looked at Eguriko. His expression looked like he was joking, but he still said in a sincere voice:

“Moreover, I really can’t change this, but the reward you get for playing this game is just being able to help the poor princess, who was hurt by the monsters.

Princess… was that Rinne? Just what kind of a ‘role’ was she playing this world? Eguriko knew nothing about this. She had never been good at this kind of difficult question. However, she still grasped one of the gemstones tightly in her hand without hesitation.

“I will participate.”

Even though she was not good at playing games, she would still try her best. Eguriko’s actions will probably confuse the Rinne she knew, but Eguriko wanted to save Rinne even so.

Eguriko was prepared to kill Rinne the first time they met. Eguriko already understood then that there would be no good outcome from this, and she was used to being hated. She lived like she was a machine incapable of thought. She lived with the sole purpose of capturing eternal life, lived like a hypocritical reaper.

Rinne was really a very strange girl.

She often cried or laughed for no reason. It was so strange and incomprehensible, but Eguriko didn’t feel repulsed. Instead, she liked her, and felt Rinne was someone important to her.

She shared a pillow with Rinne and slept in the same bed as her.

She stayed in the same classroom as Rinne and went to school with her.

She listened to Rinne’s worries and accepted her embrace. The scars within Eguriko’s heart also gradually started to heal.

It was as if they were – family.

They were also friends. They were good friends who lived together. She often recalled the words Rinne spoke to her, and could never forget Rinne’s gentleness.

Rinne tried her best to defend Eguriko before Sakaki, who had his doubts

about Eguriko.

Can I become someone important to you, Guriko-chan? Rinne said this to Eguriko in a matter-of-fact way. She was so happy. Rinne's existence and her words gave salvation to Eguriko's soul, which had died a thousand years ago.

Therefore, she wanted to repay Rinne. She wanted to say thank you to Rinne so many times.

"Rinne…"

Rinne. Rinne. I want to see you. I want to go back to how it was before.

The three of them would walk on the road towards the school. They would laugh and cry together. She wanted that peaceful life back again.

"I see…"

Kajiri smiled. He felt a little dizzy. As he wobbled, he kept explaining:

"The way to save the world will be easy, but difficult at the same time. It's easily doable, but definitely not reliable. The rates of success may be a hundred percent, or it could be zero percent. I can't make any predictions. We can only pray."

Kajiri faced Eguriko, who kept a tight grasp on the gemstone. He tried his best to hide his worsening condition, and put on a determined face as he said to her:

"Go find Usagawa Rinne. She is within the bowels of the school. You won't be absorbed even if you approach that place, as long as you bring this gemstone with you. That's our current 'game setting'. However – your opponent is God Himself. I can't guarantee that place will remain the same for a long time. You must be at your sharpest and go seek her immediately."

She really couldn't understand anything at all. Why would saving Rinne be involved with saving the world? Seriously. She didn't understand at all. He was forcibly writing the rules as he pleased, and she joined this game even without knowing the actual purpose. It was really puzzling.

However, Kajiri's expression was very serious, even more than usual. That itself contained very important information for Eguriko.

"Would this really…"

Eguriko asked in a low voice as she faced Kajiri, who had a faint sense of expectation on his face. The fatigue that came after a prolonged battle was also mixed in her tone.

"… would this really manage to save Rinne?"

Kajiri shook his head at this hesitant question.

"I don't know. If this doesn't work, then everything will be over. It will be over for us, for your friend – and even for the entire world."

"…"

The room was momentarily plunged into silence. The lonely silence felt unbearable, and everyone couldn't help but stare at each other. Eguriko's palms started to sweat with her nervousness. She twirled the gemstone in her hand and contemplated in silence. She thought of what she needed to do, the meaning of Kajiri's words, and what Rinne would feel.

Moments later, Mina stretched out her hand and took a gemstone. Breaksun took one up as well.

"You…"

Eguriko yelled out in surprise. Mina, on the other hand, sighed as if she found everything to be a bother.

"I'll go with you no matter what. After all, I was the one who killed Rinne-chan back then. I watched you getting so anxious and wanting to save Rinne-chan, and I felt this annoying sense of guilt. There was no way I was going to allow that kind of depression to stay around me."

"Mmm, yes. I'm a support character. Um, I'm just like an ordinary human, so I shouldn't be a bother for you guys."

Breaksun smiled softly, even though she undoubtedly felt scared at the same time. She – no, those like Eguriko – were different from normal humans due to the Apples within their bodies. However, they were not legendary heroes or warriors. They were not those extraordinary people. They had the same worries as other people, they were also full of flaws, and they wanted others to carry the duty of fighting for the world too.

But there was no one left. Eguriko and her friends would have to do it.

They would have to head forth, for they couldn’t allow the world to be end here. Perhaps this world was the exact world that Rinne liked, the world where Rinne lived happily with Eguriko and Sakaki. The world where the three of them could still live happily like before, a world full of hope.

"Indeed..."

Rinne, I'll definitely come to save you. That means I will save the entire world. If I can, I will maintain this peace eternally. Although she didn't know if she was capable of it, Eguriko will set forth to do it.

The nightmare commenced from the moment Eguriko made up the mind to do it.

Snatch - the final gemstone was taken by a hand that stretched out towards them. It was a white wrist wearing huge gloves. It looked like Mitsuki, Mina's younger sister, who often appeared in this place but had been missing for some time. She took hold of that gemstone.

A smile surfaced on her smile afterwards. It was a repulsive smile. It was completely different from her usual innocent and optimist personality. It was a cruel smile.

"... Mi-chan?"

Her sister Mina furrowed her brows and was about to say something. At that moment, both Kajiri and Eguriko responded to this too. Just what was this unpleasant feeling? It was so familiar. They instinctively felt a chill. Could it be -!?

"Ah."

Mitsuki looked very confused and shook her little head towards the occupants in the room, which had suddenly filled up with tension.

"You were still not fooled? I was planning to confuse you and make it hard for you to recognize me. Would you really realize I'm someone else when you see me in person?"

"She's not Mitsuki!"

Eguriko couldn't help but yell out. She opened her eyes wide, and her brain felt like it couldn't keep up with how the situation was changing. She was feeling confused. She suddenly switched to her battle stance, and took out spoons in order to protect the friends who were still in a daze -

At the same time.

"Be it heroes or protagonists, I am the only one you need."

She chuckled.

"So... all of you, die!"

Shining thorns suddenly erupted out all over Mitsuki's body.

These thorns made of flesh exploded outward, with repulsive speed. They stretched towards everyone in the room, stabbing rapidly towards everyone as if they were going to penetrate Mina, Kajiri, Breaksun, and Eguriko.

"This - "

In that brief moment, as if the time of his entire world had just stopped, Kajiri suddenly felt his cranial artery being pierced. The spraying blood flew everywhere at a speed even faster than those thorns of flesh. The crimson color that sprayed out from the greatest blood pump, spraying out straight from the heart, instantly dyed the entire world a startling shade.

"Kajiri!?"

Breaksun let out a despairing wail. Eguriko didn't have any time to check up on

him. The rapidly approaching thorns of flesh made it impossible to dodge them, as if they were going to instantly swallow her whole. However, the instant they touched Eguriko's skin, the thorns of flesh shattered as if they were sculptures of ice.

The flesh-colored fragments scattered everywhere. The person most in shock was not Eguriko nor Mina, however. It was Mitsuki, who attacked them - no, it was the person with Mitsuki's appearance.

"It got rewritten - !?"

Eguriko rapidly threw out her spoon before she understood that sentence. Mina also took an unmarked spray can from who knows where, and instantly sprayed out a thick mist.

The moment the silver spoon and the pristine thick fog flew out, their enemy was also rapidly dissolving and disintegrating. It was a completely unexpected way to dodge. The spoon hit the wall, and the thick fog was sprayed onto the tatami instead as well. The sound of something shattering and the suddenly tense atmosphere made Eguriko's heart beat rapidly.

The white fog that Mina kept letting out was chasing the incredible liquid creature that wriggled all over the room, but it just could not reach it -

"Ahaha. This is dangerous... you're not letting it go at all."

It successfully dodged those attacks. That fake Mitsuki, with its form becoming like water, suddenly reverted to the form of a person.

Mina, who was next to her, kicked at her violently. The enemy's face became that of an alien woman. Her abdomen was kicked by Mina's full force, and flew out of the room after smashing through the main door.

"You bastard!"

Mina once again let out the Annihilation Mist, the magical mist that could ignore all concepts and opposition and strike the enemy. The door and the floor around it all disappeared instantly.

Genocide Justice

Even so, the enemy successfully dodged Mina's attack.

"Ahaha!"

A happy expression appeared on the face of the woman no one recognized. She placed the key item that enabled them to approach the school - the red gemstone - into her mouth and swallowed it.

"It would be great to finish off some of you at the same time I obtain this. It was all your fault! Let's end here for now, and I'll let you go!"

"Are you still dreaming of escaping?"



Mina showed an extremely angry expression that was rare for her. Her Annihilation Mist that she kept letting out had already massively changed the geography of the area around her. Roads have collapsed and power poles have been snapped in half, and it collapsed as it let out countless sparks.

It was all crimson outside the room. It was a shade of crimson as dark as fresh blood that gathered the source of all life. It was all shades of red - carmine, maroon - it was a crazy scene that hurt their eyes. Eguriko shrank back after just walking for a few steps into it.

However, Mina chased their enemy without a care in the world as if she had given up on everything. Her originally pale cheeks were now red, and she yelled with wide open eyes:

"Bastard, what did you do with Ki-chan?!"

"Ahahaha!"

The woman drew out the distance between them with her unbelievable jump. The woman who was rapidly leaping changed back to Mitsuki's form. The cute little girl twirled the round tail she had and waved her fingers as if it became very fun for her:

"What did you think happened to her? Hey, what did you think happened?"

"---"

Mina felt a little rested, but she was also more enraged due to her opponent’s provocations. She opened her eyes wide and leaped forward as far as she could.

Eguriko could not go back anymore. It was impossible now. She had completely lost her sense of self. Guriko looked at the enemy, who was heading further and further away with a terrifying speed, and Mina who was chasing her as much as

she could. She was going to chase after them – but the pained cries behind her made her stop.

“Wait…”

It was a low, soft, and heartbroken sound.

“Kajiri… Kajiri…”

Eguriko turned around at the door.

Kajiri was lying on crimson-stained ground. His face was pallid, as if he was dead.

# EPILOGUE 09 - The Seven Dwarfs

God did not give Saibara Mina the kind of special talent that made other people like her.

No one was perfect in this world. Everyone had flaws upon close inspection. She understood this. However, even though she knew she was far from perfect, she was very sensitive to the small flaws and failures of others and easily became upset with them. It was really mental. She was often paranoid and never looked happy. Mina was already thought of as a very abnormal perfectionist when she was still a normal human.

Others certainly noticed this side of Mina's personality too. She reached the same conclusion after she analyzed herself. Mina expected the best of everyone else and she was never satisfied when she spent time with other people. She always spurted complaints and rants that put other people off. She was as a very intolerable bad woman.

Finally, Mina felt unhappy about herself. She started to dislike and fear meeting other people, and almost never left her house.

Why did she hate other people so much? Mina pondered and became frustrated. Finally, Mina realized something. As she came to dislike more and more people, there was no one left who she liked.

She was lost when she realized this. There was truly no one left who she liked. No matter how close they were to her, be they friends or family, or strangers who weren't able to hurt her, she disliked all of them. And though she still interacted with them on intimate terms, she knew each parties despised the other and insulted each other internally.

This kind of knowledge was very, very disgusting.

A world where there was no one you liked would probably be a very lonely and

terrifying world.

Mina was very scared and tried her best to like others, but it didn't work. She took a long time. Mina's mind became very strange, and it became almost impossible for her to go back to normal.

Perhaps it was because she hardly interacted with others as a kid and just liked to read on her own. The people in books and manga all had perfect appearances and actions.

But people were not like this in reality. Therefore, she would always feel dissatisfied. She would always be unhappy and she can't like others.

Ahh, Mina reminisced. She had once cried in her cold, sterile room when she was still human, hugging her knees. If she could live all over again, if she could choose a completely different path, if she could go through reincarnation and obtain a different life -

- she would definitely try her best to like someone.

The gluttonous mist ignored all concepts and materials in this world, as it erased everything around it by force. The mist completely deleted the enormous beetle that rushed towards her with all its might. The enemy's huge body was split in half from the middle and rolled along the road, then disappeared completely.

Mina panted heavily and ran forwards while keeping up her guard.

"Ahhh."

She realized her hand was bleeding only when the spray can fell from her hands. She seemed to have been attacked while being completely oblivious. There was also blood dripping from her head.

Even now, she still did not have a full grasp of the situation.

She just knew that her body did not feel pain. Maybe there wasn't a big wound. The wounds on her wrists would speedily recover anyways. Only the bloodstain would remain. The mark that was a mixture of her blood and the

monsters she killed.

She chased that bastard with Mitsuki's appearance and sprinted along the city with no purpose. The small town that was always enveloped by the light of God was now forever covered in a crimson shade reminiscent of dusk, making the place feel mysterious and terrifying.

But it was fine. Neither God nor the world mattered anymore. The only thing that mattered was finding that bastard, that most despicable bastard, and killing her immediately. That was the only way her mind could be at ease.

Mitsuki, Mitsuki... Mitsuki was her little sister who had always supported her, both before and after their transformation into immortals. But she was...!

"Ahhh!"

She roared and tried to chase away the wild thoughts in her head. She didn't want to think about anything right now. She just wanted to find her enemy and kill her. She vented her anger upon everything in the world. Mina was now completely dominated by a powerful desire to destroy.

"Type B - Jack Jewel Fixation Mist."

The thin mist that poured out endlessly completely repelled these small-fry monsters. Mina took out another spray can and sprayed more mist towards the large buildings near her.

The faint mist poured out slowly and steadily and flew gently between the collapsed floorboards and walls of the buildings. The mist stuck to the structure and fixed them mid-air. Mina then jumped higher and higher on the floorboards she fixed with Jack Jewel Fixation Mist, and instantly reached the top of the building. She jumped forward without hesitation, seeking any trace of her escaped enemy.

Her enemy.

The despicable enemy who had taken Mitsuki's form. She wouldn't let her escape. She would capture her even if she had to follow her into the bowels of Hell itself. She would kill her.

Mina suddenly realized that her mind was full of those cold-blooded thoughts, those plain and simple thoughts.

Her brain was full of emptiness and rage, but her body still unconsciously chose the most appropriate behavior.

She flew into the sky as if she was a bat.

The breeze blew Mina's three long braids as they danced in the air like snakes.

Jack .

Fixation Mist fixated various spots of air and she leapt up one step at a time, moving forward by stepping on invisible points as if she was walking on nothing. Although the enemy escaping via the road was moving very fast and looked to have unbelievable stamina, Mina would not give up no matter what. Jumping freely between the buildings, Mina seemed to fly as if she was in a movie.

She finally landed in front of her opponent and attacked with the spray cans in both hands simultaneously. She gazed at the fake Mitsuki in front of her and her boiling hatred sprayed out with the mist. Mina then gave her opponent a death declaration:

"Prepare yourself... I am more cruel than you can imagine."

Her endless rage made her short of breath. Mina's face was pale and she moaned in a low voice:

"I will kill you - without mercy."

Words were meaningless by now, and sounds were not necessary. Mina's was entirely focused on the opponent before her and wanted nothing less than to tear and bite her apart. Right, she should do that. That fake Mitsuki looked at Mina, who was completely expressionless, and still smiled and spoke very leisurely:

"Oh? I'm so scared. How can an elder sister treat her own younger sister with such a desire to kill? I can't imagine such a lethal attitude."

"... Shut up."

She said all this to rile up Mina. Mina saw blood in her eyes and felt extremely anxious. This wouldn't do. She must kill this person, even if she died in the process. She needed to calm herself before she could manage to mercilessly chop up this bastard.

She took a deep breath and looked sideways at the enemy. This other woman

only shrugged her shoulders and pointed her hands somewhere else. Mina kept up her guard and looked towards the direction she pointed toward.

She saw a nightmarish scene.

"..."

It was unpredicted. Totally unpredicted, veritably the worst situation possible.

That imposter sniggered and said words to Mina with a soft, sweet voice, as if to provoke her.

"Isn't it awesome? Mmm, it's ok even if you want to kill other people too..."

On the ordinary and small rural path between the scattered shops at the end of Mina's gaze were two young people Mina knew very well.

"Mitaka! Tatsue!"

The boy and girl were lying in a pool of blood and not moving at all. They had probably been attacked by countless monsters. They - they were Mitsuki's friends. They were also Mina's friends, who were just children enjoying their happy and sweet life!

Takamikado Mitaka and Kuroki Tatsue.

Mina couldn't say anything towards the boy and girl lying on the puddle of blood, who were still holding hands. After giving one look at Mitsuki's imposter - Mina howled in sorrow and ran towards Mitaka and Tatsue.

"Hehehehe."

That monster's loud laughter, mixed with hidden scorn, echoed behind Mina.

It was just for the blink of an eye, but she was grateful to that bastard. She didn't dare to think what would happen if it had been too late, and Mina hadn't noticed Tatsue and Mitaka. Mina might have lost someone important to her once again -

Once again?

"Mmmm."

Her younger sister's form took over all of her vision. How was Mitsuki?! A certain part of her brain kept trying its best to discard the terrible thoughts. However, she could not even deceive herself, but was influenced by that worst possible reality.

Mitsuki was - Mitsuki was -

"Ah - Ahhhhhh!"

Mina roared like a beast. Her own roaring rushed past her own ears loudly, as if blood was also going to seep out of her throat. She sank completely into madness. She still needed to fight. She couldn't allow her heart to be frozen over because of her sorrow. She still needed to go kill those people. If tears clouded her eyes and made her blind, then that would be very annoying.

Even so, warm liquid ignored Mina's consciousness and flowed out of her eyes, slithering down her cheeks.

Tears.

Where should she go now?

She was full of sorrow, loneliness, anxiety, and hatred. Everything - she wanted everything that was Sterilization Disinfection to disappear. She could not do anything. She was not any different to when she was still a human.

Perhaps, no matter what she did, no matter if she was alive or dead, she would make no effect on the world. Maybe that was the kind of woman she was. If that was the case, then if she had stayed in that sterile room and never left, if she had starved herself to death - then maybe she wouldn't be hurting like this anymore.

No.

"What are you doing!? What are you guys doing!?"

It was not over yet! Mina and the world were not done yet. She just had to

erase all regret and despair. As long as her wrists could still move, then she would hold on to her spray cans and fight. As long as her fingers could still move, then she would press down on the nozzle and fight. Maybe she wouldn't be able to change the world, but she might be able to help some people after all.

Actually, she wasn't someone who was that useless, annoying, or despicable.

The person whom Mitsuki adored should be that nurse who helped others, that outstanding older sister.

The white mist was dancing and circling in the sky like a dragon. It flew rapidly in all directions and smashed the crowds of monsters apart, scattering and annihilating them. Blood splattered in the air and the sound of roaring echoed, as pieces of meat and dismembered flesh scattered all over. Mina ignored all this and jumped towards Mitaka and Tatsue, who were lying in puddles of blood, and protected them.

She held onto the spray cans tightly and sprayed out white mist continuously. The enemy in front of her instantly stiffened and ceased to move. Mina warned them in a low and threatening voice:

"Yes - don't just assume you can just rampage everywhere, that you can eat up humans as if it was a joke, and do whatever you want according to your preferences."

She was the cruel and emotionless Digestive Organ, who existed in order to hunt all the evils of this world. Saibara Mina smiled and rapidly slaughtered the remaining monsters. The pristine white mist danced everywhere and touched the monsters' limbs, torso, head, without distinction. It also touched the ground and the buildings. The monsters' resistance seemed so weak and pointless. They could neither attack nor defend. The white torrent of judgment did not allow any resistance to stand before it. It completely erased all matter and concept.

"... You've never heard of Sterilization Disinfection, have you?"

This was a slaughter. She tore giant wounds on the enormous monsters with their muscles and sinews sticking out. She parried all the flames and bolts of lightning they shot out, and hammered all the flying monsters down onto the ground. She arrogantly sent all the idiots who flew here to their graves. She was crazy. Mina sank completely into madness. She became a monster even more

terrifying than the other monsters - she was the Greater Fragment who erased all the evils of this world, Sterilization Disinfection. All the actions of the monsters were meaningless before her.

She blew up the enemies on the ground. The frothing blood was cleared out with the torrential wind, and completely disappeared.

She had lost count of how long this battle lasted.

"..."

When Mina came back to, the entire world had been stained blood red, and it was enveloped in a terrifying silence. The monsters were already dismembered and could no longer move. All she could hear was her own heavy sound of breathing. All the lives that flew towards the school were also silent, as if they were trying very hard not to make any sounds and not to draw attention, being merely a background decoration.

Mina was standing alone on this dramatic stage, something that only existed in the imagination. The background was very vague. She knelt down and shook Tatsue and Mitaka, who were lying next to her feet.

She then started to examine their bodies. They were covered with small wounds - though their wounds didn't seem to be lethal. Perhaps the fatigue and loss of blood and the confusion of where should they go to be safe had overwhelmed their bodies, and caused them to be like this. Humans were this kind of creature, after all. Once they decided on their destination, they would keep marching that way, but they could not persist on a long road without an actual goal.

A kind look surfaced on Mina's face and she patted their hair as if she was caressing a kid. Although she had lost a lot of her Fragment's power and was very tired - she still felt very reassured.

"... You've had a tough time, no? Don't worry. It should be all fine now."

She expertly instilled vitality into the bodies of the two children. It was Mitaka who jumped up first, then Tatsue also opened her eyes dazedly. Although their eyes still retained a residue of whatever horrors they witnessed, they perked up again after noticing Mina's presence.

Looking at their still dazed expressions, Mina lowered her head and spoke as if she was angry.

"Come on. You two look like as if you saw a demon."

"Mina-san."

Tatsue made a surprisingly childish sound, completely different to how she usually appeared. She hugged Mina tightly. Mina looked very confused and didn't respond at all. The two of them were stained with blood, but Tatsue still hugged her tightly. Mina felt her warmth and gradually calmed down.

She felt the warmth and softness of the other's body.

Tatuse wriggled lightly and made small crying sounds. She was so happy just to feel another person's warmth - it was incredible.

Tatsue shook her head and her entire body relaxed as she cried loudly.

"It was scary! So scary... They were so big, and they came out one after the other. These monsters!"

"Tatsue-san..."

Mina petted her Tatsue's head softly. Mina's eyes were full of genuine emotions as she looked at Mitaka, who was next to them.

"Mitaka, isn't the knight shirking from his duties if your beloved princess became this terrified?"

"Speaking of being a knight... Tatsue is more powerful than me."

Mitaka smiled bitterly and his expression relaxed somewhat, replying as he hunched his shoulders.

"Compared to that, do you know what is happening right now, Mina? I don't know why, but I feel like some unbelievable and terrible things just happened. I can't stop the chill I keep feeling in my heart..."

"Indeed - "

The three of them then quickly exchanged the information they had.

Mitaka and Tatsue had gone to school after they got up in the morning. While they were on the way, they met the monsters named Nagumo Ame and

Minazuki Natsuko on the shopping street. They started fighting with them and gained a victory, then tried to rush towards Mina's apartment. However, they met more and more monsters around the school. Although they took a big loop around the school - it was as if the entire Kannonsakazaki became the nest of monsters. They kept meeting monsters and fighting against them. And in the end, they exhausted their stamina and collapsed - that was what they gathered.

Mina was particularly interested in those two named Ame and Natsuko. The monsters the others met were mostly without awareness, carnivores who rampaged in madness. That was to be expected. However, after listening to Mitaka's story, she felt those two women clearly had the power of independent thought. They moved with a clear goal, and were not normal monsters.

They seemed very similar to Long-Armed Demon.

Compared to ordinary humans, they were existences bestowed with despicable abilities. That Ultimate Shield The Weakest, who was acting in the shadows - it was very possible that she used her ability to modify the flesh and created these monsters.

However, they still did not understand her goal. She seemed to have set up barriers to prevent others from approaching the school. What would be the purpose of that?

Tatsue, Mitaka, and Mina conversed with each other and quietly thought over the meaning behind Single Room’s words. The two youngsters soon became anxious and looked over at Mina.

“Mina-san… what should we do now?”

“Indeed –”

Mina nodded gravely as she heard Tatsue’s question. Yes, it wasn’t the time to converse with leisure right now. Even her ability has a limit.

Revenge. Or rather, to vent her anger.

Mina spoke out loudly in a vicious and terrifying voice:

“I am chasing Ultimate Shield The Weakest. She was probably planning some silly conspiracy. I will capture her and interrogate her, and kill her as soon as possible.”

Mina grasped the spray cans rightly and gave a pallid smile to the other two.

“As for the two of you, it’s best to hide in my apartment. Perhaps – perhaps Guriko-chan and Single Room would still be there. Although those kids might not be able to push back so many monsters – they can still do more than ordinary humans. Therefore…”

She then tightly embraced Tatsue and Mitaka. She had never embraced anyone as tightly as this in her memory. She wanted to seek warmth, and she was terrified to be refused. Mina's own personality was very bad, and she also had a very satirical tongue. She might be despised by others.

But these children, these foolish children, had never noticed her own despicable true nature and embraced her without any inhibition. She was so happy. Maybe the 'Mina' that Tatsue and Mitaka saw did not have any of the flaws she actually had. They were very innocent and naive, and only saw a part of her. They trusted this perfect Mina before them, and Mina wanted to maintain it for as long as possible.

"If we... go to the apartment..."

Tatsue raised a question that might not have any meaning:

"Will we see Princess Mitsuki there?"

"..."

Princess Mitsuki. Mitsuki. Her sister. Her body couldn't stop shaking when she thought of her. Mina didn't answer them and only moaned. She didn't know what they would think. Maybe they had already felt it, and that was why they were being quiet.

Mina hugged them greedily for a long time. However, when she realized that

Ultimate

The Weakest might be trying to runaway at this opportunity, she let go of this familial warmth.

"Mitaka. Tatsue."

She put her arms on their shoulders and barely managed to push back the tears swelling up her eyes, and lowered her head:

"... Thank you so much. You were such good friends with Ki-chan. She was very

happy."

Mina was no longer a weak human when she lifted up her head. She was the Greater Fragment of God named Disinfection Sterilization, who would completely erase all the sins of this world.

"Mina."

... That was what she wanted. She had already suffocated her heart, and resolved to exist just to kill Ultimate Shield The Weakest. Her weak nerves wavered when she heard Mitaka's voice. Mina furrowed her brows and looked at him quietly.

"Are you looking for Ultimate Shield The Weakest? I will go with you. Mina, you're still not very good with searching for other existences' auras, are you? It's hard for you to find a shapeshifter. I am a snake, so it is very easy for me to feel the existences of monsters and Greater Fragments."

"But Mitaka..."

It was too dangerous. Mitaka's battle prowess was nothing compared to those monsters. Their opponent was also that cunning Ultimate Shield The Weakest. Mina had no idea how that woman would deal with them. Mina could not possibly bring Mitaka along onto this dangerous and uneasy battlefield.

"It's fine. Let me handle it. It's too heavy to just have Mina carry everything."

Mitaka's golden eyes sparkled as he spoke to Mina sincerely.

"I am the Snake, the last Snake. I am the descendent of the Snake who tricked the first humans back then, those ancestors of humans - you and Tatsue's ancestors - and betrayed God. I don't feel the need to apologize. I don't care about what my ancestor did. But if I don't do anything right now, then the clan of Snakes might really remain traitors until the end, and end our days like this."

This Snake, who was driven crazy with his ancestor's obsession and stubbornly desired immortality, looked at Mina with seriousness,

"I would hate to be like that. I don't want humans - I don't want Tatsue and everyone else - to remember Snakes as villains and traitors. Please let me - let the race of Snakes - atone for our sins. Then I would finally be able to live together with humans without any guilt."

He spoke those clumsy words, but his adamant resolve was clear. Mitaka was still thinking about how to openly live with Tatsue, the human whom he loved. He was considering how to make up for the Original Sin that could never be erased, so that he could live equally with humans.

"... Mitaka."

Nothing she said would make a difference now. Mina sighed. To be fair, Mina would really like Mitaka to help her to search for Ultimate Shield The Weakest. Tatsue was the only problem remaining.

"Tatsue-san."

Mina felt pained to say this, but she still spoke to the black-clad girl:

"Please head to my apartment."

"Huh..."

If Mitaka was going there, then she would certainly follow. That was what Tatsue thought originally, but now her face looked very surprised.

"W, why? I want to - I want to fight with you as well, Mina-san."

"Tatsue-san."

Mitsuki's face was still imprinted firmly in Mina's mind. It kept flashing up, and she could not forget it. Perhaps even if she killed Ultimate Shield The Weakest and saved the world, her sister's image would forever be imprinted into her mind for the rest of her life.

"Please. This is a very selfish request, but please, stay alive."

It was indeed very selfish, but those were genuine words Tatsue couldn't argue against.

Some sort of emotion flashed past behind Tatsue's eyes. Mina looked at her and said her thoughts out loud.

"There are too many monsters. Ultimate Shield The Weakest is also a very despicable creature. Perhaps, this will be the end of the world. Therefore, Mitaka and I will be fighting under this worst and most malignant condition, and we may well die."

Mina spoke out her thoughts somewhat straightforwardly. After some consideration, she chose a way of expressing herself that she deemed most fitting.

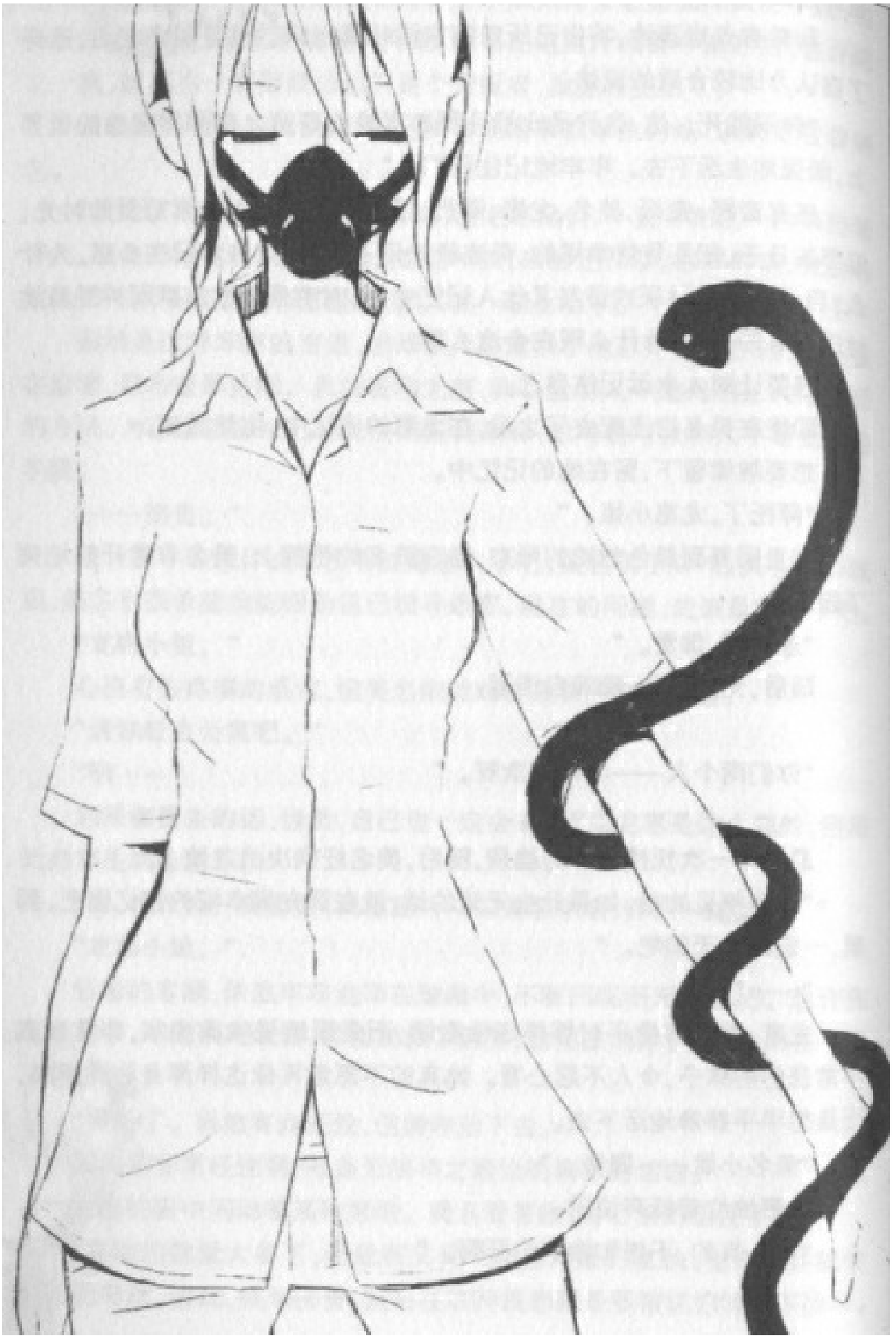
"You can't die. That may be even harder than fighting. You need to keep living resiliently in this world that is approaching its end, and remember us firmly."

Mitsuki should be remembered too. Mitsuki, Mina, Tatsue, and Mitaka; although they had only spent a very short time together, those had been very happy and miraculous days. *Please remember all this, Tatsue.* Why? Mina hated to remain in other people's memories. She was obsessed with hygiene and pathologically detested other humans. Why would she think like this now?

She wanted others to remember her forever.

She wanted to keep living in Tatsue’s memories after her own death.

She wanted to keep existing in Tatsue’s memories.



“Please, Tatsue-san.”

Mitaka reverted to his black snake form and curved along Mina’s arm. Mina smiled optimistically:

“We’re going, Mitaka.”

She then muttered unconsciously:

“I like you two – very much.”

Mina patted Tatsue’s head one last time, then rushed towards the place of battle.

“We’ll meet again. If that is impossible in this life, then we can meet again in our happy memories. That would be Heaven, right?”

“…”

Tatsue did not whine like usual. Instead, her eyes were full of tears, and looked very lonely and sad. Mina couldn’t bear to look at her. Tatsue really didn’t want to keep being covered by blood like this, and wants live quietly instead.

“Mina-san… Mitaka.”

Tatsue said in a low voice as she sobbed:

“… I really don’t want to part with you two.”

A long long time ago, a very beautiful queen lived in this world.

“Mirror mirror, who is the fairest of all?”

The Mirror of Truth, which would correctly reflect everything on this earth, answered: *That person would be you, my Queen*. The Queen was very happy.

There was a little princess named Snow White living with her.

The little princess had skin white as snow, and was astonishingly beautiful.

“Mirror mirror, who is the fairest of all?”

The Mirror of Truth started to answer the Queen’s question differently when Snow White was seven years old:

“The fairest person of all is Her Highness, Snow White.”

The Queen was consumed by jealousy and was full of rage. She immediately commanded the Hunter to kill Snow White.

But the Hunter took pity on Snow White, and he let her go. He killed a boar he found in the forest, dug out its heart, and offered that to the Queen. The Hunter told the Queen that was Snow White’s heart. The Queen dipped the heart in salt water with satisfaction, and swallowed it.

“Mirror mirror, who is the fairest of all?”

The Queen asked this again, but the Mirror of Truth still answered with Snow White’s name.

The Queen realized Snow White was still alive. She disguised herself as a peddler and found Snow White, who was living peacefully with the Seven Dwarves. The Queen approached Snow White, and strangled her with a string.

“Mirror mirror, who is the fairest of all?”

However, the Seven Dwarves undid the thin string tied around Snow White’s neck, and Snow White recovered. The Queen was full of rage and regret. She then put a poisoned comb into Snow White’s hair, and tried to kill her that way.

“Mirror mirror, who is the fairest of all?”

However, however, the Seven Dwarves pulled out the poisoned comb out of Snow White’s hair, and Snow White recovered again. The Queen could not endure this anymore. She made Snow White eat a poisoned apple in order to finally kill the princess. At the end, that was how Snow White died.

The Seven Dwarves placed Snow White's corpse into a transparent coffin and sat around it sighing. That was when the Prince passed by.

The Prince was astounded by Snow White's beauty. He wanted to remain by her side, even if she was a corpse. He therefore commanded to have the transparent coffin transported to his castle.

The Prince could not control his admiration of Snow White and kissed her while the coffin was still in transport. Snow White was so startled that she spat out the poison apple stuck in her throat, and woke up once again.

Delighted, the Prince married Snow White. They made the evil Queen wear red-hot iron shoes during the wedding banquet, and made her dance until she died.

Snow White married the Prince and lived happily ever after.

She kept dreaming of annoying things and could not sleep. Usagawa Rinne was reading a book in her transparent coffin. Snow White. Rinne felt no emotions towards that tale. Such a happy story only existed in fairy tales. Reality was full of coincidences and slaughter. This was a happy end built up from a woman's jealousy and murderous rage, and actual murder.

The space Rinne occupied became dominated by a dark red light without her realization. She felt incredulous to how this happened, but she still tried very hard to look at the words on the book, so she could feel somewhat reassured. She felt that she should not exist like this, that she should not think of nothing, that she probably forgot something important she had to do. However, all she now felt was boredom and fatigue. She just wanted to be enveloped numbly by this calming red light, and enjoy all this.

She was in pain, but she could not feel it. It was as if someone was bearing this pain for her. She was very sorry. Someone was bleeding for her, giving out dying screams, and dying for her. Even if she slept, this realistic feeling would only cast her into horrifying dreams.

This space was quiet and calm, but there were no changes. Therefore, it felt empty, and it was meaningless.

*Is this what it feels like to be in Heaven? Or is this what it feels like to die?*

"…"

Rinne closed the book and emitted words from her mouth using her metallic and sharp voice, the voice that Sakaki said he really liked. She mumbled:

"Snow White."

The last sentence of the book she read unconsciously tumbled out of her mouth:

"She married the Prince and lived happily ever after."

She tilted her head.

"And then?"

She didn't know.

"And then – ?"

Just as the legends recount, the God who created mankind bestowed upon them the capacity to love others. That was precisely the cruelty of God. Humans will love others, but humans will one day die. No matter how much two people are in love with each other, death will always part them.

*If they treasure these memories of their love, then they would not feel very sad when parting.* Such words were powerless before people who were watching warmth depart from them. Parting was sorrow itself, a very strong sorrow.

Then, was the sentiment of 'love' the trap of a God who hated mankind? We feel lonely without love. We feel sad when we do love. Then what should mankind do?

Breaksun Hanselmine was currently considering this. Parting had always been

so sudden, so senseless, so unbearable, no matter when it struck. Even if her heart was prepared, all her expectations would be completely shattered when something unexpected popped up.

It was like this when her dad died. It was also like this when her mom died. It was the same when her family and friends left her one by one due to Poison Catastrophe's corrosion of cause and effect. Breaksun became somewhat numb with that. Even if she did nothing, there were many things that would naturally disappear before her eyes.

At the end, she was still all alone. There were countless people who lived alone, and always felt lonely or sad. There was no sense behind such things. It was very cruel.

Breaksun prayed.

If this was punishment, then she wanted to be forgiven. If this was destiny, then she wanted to be saved from it.

However, God was all huddled up in the dark red school and couldn't see anything at all. Perhaps even God was powerless towards this, and He was alone too. What a lonely world.

"Kajiri."

The red-haired boy was barely breathing as he lay on Breaksun's knees. In order to protect the others from the enemy's sudden attack, his carotid artery had been cut open and he had lost a large amount of blood.

Using Single Room's ability would severely drain Kajiri's life. And once he was weakened and wounded enough, his life would reach its end. Kajiri's sense of existence started to crumble from his fingertips as he gradually approached death.

"Kajiri. Kajiri."

She called out his name endlessly without any purpose. The songs of the witch, the Fragments of God – none of those worked. They were all powerless. None of those could stop Kajiri from gradually dying. It hurt. Her chest hurt.

Eguriko stood at the wide open door before the bloodstained apartment.

Breaksun was still endlessly calling for Kajiri, as if she was trying to wake him up. Eguriko was worried about Mina, who went to chase the enemy. She also felt very uneasy and could not calm down, but she still dutifully stayed next to door.

Crack. Crack. As if he was an ancient bronze statue that gradually cracked apart, Kajiri's body began to gradually break down. It was very slow, but it was definitely irreversible. If he could manage to consume some other immortal's flesh or blood, then he could hold on for a while longer. However, he did not want to keep what little was left of his life through eating the flesh of others, and he refused to do so.

"Breaksun."

Rarely, he pronounce her name correctly. As if he was a shy young boy, Kajiri said with a straightforward face:

"Thank you."

"I don't remember having done anything worth of your thanks."

Tears swelled out of her eyes and scattered down. All Breaksun could do now was to let Kajiri put his head on her knees and quietly caress his hair.

"That's not true."

Kajiri's voice was very weak. It softly brushed past her ears, but echoed clearly in her heart.

"I don't remember anything from when I was still a normal human."

Breaksun still remembered when she was still a normal human, when she was someone ordinary before she inherited the Greater Fragment of God, when she was neither an immortal nor someone with supernatural abilities. She remembered her parents in her native country, her school, and the scenes and scents she experienced. If those were merely memories, then these precious things buried in her heart would definitely be lost one day.

Doesn't Kajiri remember these?

"The humans who receive a Greater Fragment will have their personalities distorted based on the roles they shoulder. Unpleasant Counter-Current, with her double personalities, was a good example. I – Single Room, who created the

world with Genesis, can change anything in the world according to my wishes. I can make the entire world how I want to. However, I don't want to world to be remade completely according to my own needs. I wanted to have my 'self' completely destroyed."

Completely destroyed? She still did not understand what he said. It was probably something terrifying, like death. Breaksun lowered her head and sank into silence. Her gaze crossed with that of Kajiri's, who lifted his head and looked up.

"I don't have anything anymore. I have lost my family and homeland. I'm even confused about my name and ethnicity. I only listened to others' wishes, and lived as the contraption that could fulfil such wishes. It was such a meaningless life. Damn it."

Then he showed his cute canine teeth and smiled sweetly.

"But Breaksun… I was very happy to spend time with you. Although the name Nikuyama Kajiri was very weird, and I'd think 'idiot' whenever I hear it, it was the first time I had lived like a normal person. So – thank you."

"…"

Kajiri wanted to say lines that were more beautiful and magnificent, but he could not remember them anymore. He originally wanted the atmosphere to be calmer and more reassuring.

"It was the same for me."

Breaksun was very happy when she heard Kajiri say that he felt happy even though they only lived together for a little while. She also recalled those scenes – when she casually took him out of that dark forest, gave him a name, took him around to places where she liked to hang out, and told stupid stories to him.

"I'm very happy too…"

Even if she didn't look very happy. Even if she could only say these silly words powerlessly.

"But please don't die. I'd hate to end everything now. I hate it. Kajiri – I will think up a better-sounding and more awesome name. I will make Kajiri feel

comfortable and happy… we can go eat delicious things again, go to the movies, watch TV… we can go to so many different places, Kajiri, ok? So you can't die. Kajiri, don't die…"

Then Breaksun sank into an incomprehensible confusion, and started to speak in other languages as well as Japanese. However, Kajiri's face was full of smiles as if he understood it and felt it was very fun.

"It was great to have met you, Breaksun."

However, his gaze shifted to Eguriko, who was standing next to the door and gave out no hint of her presence. Kajiri shook all over his body, and his expression became very serious.

"…"

Kajiri had always called the girl using nicknames such as Eguriko or Guriko, but now he spoke the name 'Gankyū Eguriko'. He wanted to say something to Eguriko with great seriousness. Breaksun wiped away her tears and looked towards Eguriko, but the latter only leaned against the wall in silence.

Kajiri's eyes were a gentle shade of red slightly lighter than the crimson around him. He looked at Eguriko.

"I thought just now that I might be able to survive. I endured this and didn't speak out, and I felt I still can't pronounce such cringy words…"

The black eyes and the red eyes crossed their gazes in the air. Kajiri questioned in a low voice, as if he was threatening her:

"Do you – have enough courage to face the truth?"

Kajiri kept repeating the same thing as if he was only repeating gossip. It was as if he did not notice Eguriko at all, who was completely expressionless.

"The truth of this world. This meaningless construction. These phenomenon happening right now. Do you want to know the truth behind these arrangements? You might be able to save the world if you knew this. However, after you learn this, you will become very unfortunate. Do you want to know it even then? It won't matter if no one knew of this truth. I didn't know anything about this myself before I used Single Room's ability to analyse this light. If no

one knew this, the world would actually have kept working as per normal. But right now – it is an emergency."

Kajiri closed his eyes and said in a voice that was almost too low to hear:

"Please. I am powerless, except for my prayers. Please go save this world after knowing the truth. The world is currently about to completely crumble. No one else can do this apart from you, Gankyū Eguriko. I don't feel happy about it – but I have no choice except to trust you with this. Please."

The existence closest to God in this world had sank into the position where he could do nothing but pray, but Eguriko's expression did not change at all. Breaksun had no idea what was going on in Eguriko's brain. For some reason, an ominous premonition swelled up in Breaksun's heart.

Perhaps Kajiri was walking along a terrifying and dangerous bridge. She felt that instinctively. Bequeathing Gankyū Eguriko with the heavy duty of saving the world – the possibility of succeeding with this kind almost made him despair.

It was a gamble.

"Please don't let this world – please don't let us – disappear completely. Please don't let everything disappear – please preserve the fact that we are existing here, the fact that we were truly alive on this world."

"… I can't understand anything you're saying right now."

Eguriko suddenly parted her lips. Her voice was very calm.

"Guriko asked this same question to someone very important to Guriko before. I asked if she had the courage to see the truth. That person replied immediately."

It was a voice that shattered all evil omens, a sound full of hope and power.

"Rather than feeling horrified from not knowing the truth, it would be better to feel sad after understanding it. That person was a very strong girl. Guriko's answer would be the same as her. If I am not stronger than her…"

Eguriko then smiled towards Kajiri for the first time. She called out Kajiri's full name:

"Tell me, Nikuyama Kajiri."

Eguriko’s expression was full of spite. She narrowed her eyes, as if she was about to vomit out something:

“Eguriko is also about to reach the point of flying into a rage if I don’t get some answers soon.”

# EPILOGUE 11 - The Witch

Though I created mankind, I wish to erase it from the face of the Earth. I regret the fact that I created such an existence.

- The Old Testament, Genesis, on human wickedness

Sometimes, very rarely, the concept of beauty was a cruel one. Grandiose and beautiful things - such as the dusk, the starry sky, the ocean, and God - were existences that invoked jealously from miniscule humans. Humans would be dazed by those things, would feel empty, or feel so sad they would cry. Those were only very rare occurrences.

Breaksun was gazing at that sparkling, divine light, that light looking like a vast and beautiful dusk. At the same time, she narrowed her eyes and caressed Kajiri, who was silent and had his head resting on her knees. The empty countryside road in front of the silent apartment building was covered with an absolute and transparent sheen of blood red.

A black-clad girl was walking slowly in the middle of this crimson.

Guriko had thanked Kajiri after he explained everything, then she left emotionlessly without a fuss, just like how she usually was. It was as if she was simply going to wrap up some ordinary business, and did not tarry at all. Breaksun thought she was very awesome.

It was as if she was going to end the world.

All of existence were equally losing themselves in this silent finale.

Gankyū Eguriko started to proceed towards the final stage after simply giving

one wave of the spoon in her hand.

Eguriko's figure remained clear and crisp in that red, the dark crimson that threatened to devour her. Breaksun gazed after Eguriko, who was walking forward and casting a long shadow behind her, and that irritating red light which threatened to refuse her entry. Breaksun then slowly articulated:

"It's so pretty."

"Ahh, so pretty... crap."

She gazed at the most beautiful light in the world, that divine light. She then lifted up her head in loneliness. Kajiri was as innocent as ever - that was really like him. His clear eyes were wide open as he looked towards her and mumbled:

"---"

She didn't hear what he said at all. It was a soft and weak voice that briefly brushed past her ears. He seemed to have said that she was even prettier. She couldn't help but feel happy, but she still didn't understand it.

What's wrong? When Breaksun asked this, Kajiri was already almost completely dissolved into the red light that filled the entire world. His life was also over. His physical body gradually became sparkling granules, and he started to disappear from his finger tips.

For a brief moment, the light danced around Breaksun as if it was a butterfly, before quickly disappearing.

Breaksun looked dazedly at the place where Kajiri had existed, and she mumbled softly:

"I'm all alone again."

Breaksun smiled as she sat quietly on the ground. Then she started to cry.

"I just wanted you to stay next to me. Is that wish so hard to fulfil...?"

No one was there to answer her.

Moon Rainbow was very irritated. Extremely irritated. She was very very very upset and her brain seemed to keep secreting strange fluids that made her bowels all twisted, her sight blurred, and a roar that was both a loud growl and a sharp laugh fell from her lips. And yet she was completely oblivious to all that.

It was the worst feeling.

"Terrible..."

This was the center of the world. It was the school grounds of Kannonsakazaki High School and its surroundings, piled high with the corpses of countless monsters. In the middle of it all stood a woman with very cruel and cold eyes, and she was looking this way unblinkingly.

She had a long white braid, as if it was the solidification of the white nocturnal mist. Her skin was pristine white, and even the clothes she wore was a pristine white uniform like a nurse's. However, there was an incongruous and crude mask on her face. A pitch-dark snake was also curled around her right wrist, and her hands held those terrifying spray cans with their arcane powers.

Her face was full of an intent to kill, akin to a demon.

"this is so horrible... this is ruined!"

Moon's plan should have been perfect. It was formulated after a very thorough and detailed investigation. It was the best plan achieved after having repeatedly considered everything. All uncertainties have been perfectly included into this plan, and were performing as they should. The nebulous future was also solidifying in the direction she desired. The entire world was within the control of her own two hands. Everything was slowly progressing according to her predicted plans up until now.

The goal was simple and clear.

The reason was simple jealousy.

Her chosen actions were the most perfect.

Success was right in front of her. That was how it should have been. Why why why why.

"Why are you here, you piece of shit, Sterilization Disinfection!?"

"... It is Sterilization Disinfection's duty to erase evil."

Her words were kind of muffled due to the mask. However, there was a strange sense of inhuman cruelty because of that. Sterilization Disinfection shook her head and showed an enthralling smile.

"No - that's not how it is. None of this matters - the Greater Fragments of God, the duty bestowed by the world - none of that matters at all, Ultimate Shield The Weakest. It's actually just a heartfelt boredom. Why am I here? Why am I hindering you? Why will I kill you?"

Moon had to take a step backwards from this feeling of being mentally suppressed. Why? This woman should just be bluffing. Moon knew this. The amount of energy left in Mina's Greater Fragment should be very low by now, especially after their actions in the Eternity Institute, the fierce battles with the Pale Horses and Melodia Noise Tear Song, and after having defeated countless monsters.

That was how it should have been.

"Do you still not understand? You're such an idiot. Think with your slow brain."

Yes. Moon had the ability to change her body. Her only two nemeses were Single Room, who could modify the very concept of the materials, and Sterilization Disinfection, who could erase everything. Single Room should already be dead. Sterilization Disinfection had also wasted a lot of her power fighting the monsters under Moon's banner. All of Moon's subordinates, including Nagumo Ame and Minazuki Natsuko, were all a part of the huge price to pay in order to destroy this person. That was not an exaggeration.

In fact, Mina did look very horrible. She was covered in blood and she looked very exhausted. However, Moon could still feel that gloomy and terrifying aura from her. That aura was still pushing down on Moon now, even though objectively Moon should have an absolute advantage here.

*But why, why?*

"After killing someone's younger sister..."

*Why!?*

"... Don't you suppose other people will hate you?"

"Why are you not dead, bitch!?"

Sterilization Disinfection sighed as Moon screamed. She prepared her entire body for battle and approached Moon very slowly. There was a lot of distance between them, but the monsters that strolled around here were already all eliminated. Even if Moon called for support, her subordinates were still scattered throughout the town, and it would take some time for them to gather up.

The likes of Nagumo Ame and Minazuki Natsuko were humans who were modified based on Long-Armed Demon and Berobōchō. They were originally normal humans, and Moon modified their bodies based on their personalities and traits, equipping them with miraculous abilities. They were more powerful than humans with Apples - they had stronger prowess in battle though they appeared identical to other monsters. There were also many more of them, more than merely one or two hundred. If Mina fought with them, she would be damaged continuously and her stamina wasted away, and it would be very tough for Mina to even keep herself upright.

Sterilization Disinfection.

The symbolization of how God was lost. The Digestive Organ. The demon in the legend of the flood. The Greater Fragment that had slaughtered countless monsters and guarded the balance of the world - and perhaps did even more than that. Sterilization Disinfection indeed had great power. However, based on Moon's observations so far, Saibara Mina wasn't such a powerful threat.

She was simply an emotionally unpredictable and very clumsy person. She easily yielded to the temptation to show off while she was doing well, and would also suddenly feel very down for no reason. Her real personality was truly unbearable. She loved to mock others, and her own actions were also hardly praiseworthy. The way she fought was inefficient. She often did unnecessary things. There should be many ways to counter her.

Although Moon felt this way, the horror in her heart was still there. Why? Why would she feel so anxious whenever she looked at this woman? It was like a despicable premonition that her plans would be completely destroyed, and it kept swelling up in her heart - she could not calm down.

Sterilization Disinfection. Saibara Mina.

"I'm sorry... I've always been a filthy woman."

The pale woman, stained by blood, narrowed her eyes lazily.

"This current world is very silly as well, and I've always wanted to say farewell to it as soon as possible. But I didn't starve myself and no one hacked me to death. It's so troublesome. Ahh... what exactly am I expecting? What do I want? Stuff like the world and God... I really wish I'm mistaken."

Mina lifted her head, but she was looking somewhere else. Then, as if she was sighing, she opened her arms and lowered her body,

"I am just... a very boring and useless woman."

*Then die.*

*Die. Just go die.* Moon screamed in her heart. *Die die die! If you're useless, then go die! If you think you're useless, then it's better to just die! People who don't have a meaning to their lives can just die! You're all in the way! The world should be controlled by people like me anyways. Controlled by geniuses chosen by God, just like me! Useless and obedient women like you aren't the ones making the world go around. Someone like me would be more fitting!*

*Elites should dominate others. Why can't these boring creatures understand such a simple idea? They are stupid to the bone!*

Moon felt outrage towards Mina and how the latter wanted to revenge her sister. There was no difference between the dead and the living in this world anymore. What she was doing was useless. Such selfish actions will never be allowed to stop Moon's process. Moon was moving towards the school building in order to fix the entire world.

This was bothersome. Would it have been better for Moon if she left Mitsuki alive? No. It was the best decision in order to approach Single Room and then incite Mina into such a rash action, driving her into a maddening rage. It would be impossible to surreptitiously approach a group of beings with supernatural abilities once they had gathered together. It was very much necessary to split up the enemy.

Yes. Everything Moon did was the best option, taken after thorough consideration. It was a perfect battle. Therefore, these current events were

merely small challenges. They were minor obstacles outside of her expectations, something that can be easily removed.

She felt more relaxed after thinking in this light. Mina was already half dead upon closer inspection. She could easily defeat Mina even in a standard fight. The Greater Fragment named Ultimate Shield The Weakest resided within Moon. This Fragment, with the ability to alter the flesh, was the mightiest of all in a melee fight.

She could definitely beat Mina. If she beat her, then everything will be sorted. She would control the entire world. Even though there were a few things outside of her expectations, it was merely a small surprise. There were no major issues at all.

"… A mundane person like you dare to come and hinder me? Who do you think you are – you think you're so great, do you? You are such a plebeian, so unfitting. You are despicable!"

Moon had constantly thought about her plans over and over. She did everything she could to prepare for this. She was so active on the stage as a genius magician, but she lost all her glory just because of one silly woman. She accidentally obtained the Fragment of God named Ultimate Shield The Weakest and got its incredible powers – and she came to understand the truth of this world.

She understood the true form of the God of this world.

And once she understood that, she started to do everything she could to replace such a God.

She wanted to be the absolute existence that was the most beautiful and most omnipotent. To be something that others would naturally want to worship and venerate.

God - she still could not hold herself back from the jealousy and admiration she felt for that Existence.

"I killed your sister? Ahh, sorry. That's nothing big. It's not you who are dead. It was someone else. You won't feel pain no matter how much damage others receive, right? Even if it was your own sister, you won't die because she died. It doesn't matter!"

Moon was consumed by a lethal madness and started to move.

She usually appeared as the male Nashinori Zekiguchi and created massive amounts of subordinate monsters across the world, with Nagumo Ame and Minazuki Natsuko as representatives. However, she would sometimes take the appearance of these subordinates, and act next to them in their form. After Mina and Guriko clashed at the hospital, it was not Nagumo Ame who sliced off Mina’s head, but Moon in disguise. It was a very important secret, one that she did not even want her subordinates to know.

After a great deal of assistance from happenstance and inevitability, Moon felt her wish was on the cusp of being fulfilled. She obtained Single Room's jewel - that key item required to approach the crimson school that was swallowing up all life - thanks to her burrowing Mitsuki's form. All that was left was to enter the school and drag Her down from the divine throne, and place Moon herself upon it. It would be easy, simple, and there was only one step left. Moon's plans would be fulfilled perfectly then.

That God, who was sweetly enjoying the destruction of the world and didn't put up any resistance, had no reason to exist.

The world should seek out people like her, someone who was powerful and mighty enough to inherit God's throne! This was it! The era was calling out to her! She was someone chosen by the times!

"Lowly trash like you...!"

*So this - this is enough!*

"Stop interfering now! You interfering shits need to all die! That's enough! It doesn't matter even if you die! Die! Your duty is over! Die! Die! Die!"

Moon kept screaming, but Mina's shoe suddenly appeared before her face, as if the latter suddenly kicked her shoe over. Although Moon dodged on time and didn't feel much pain, she was genuinely startled. She looked, dazed, at Mina, who had taken off a shoe and stood there with one bare foot.

"... You asshole."

Mina pulled on her hair as if she didn't care at all, and looked over at Moon.

"Yelling die die die is so annoying. Doesn't it feel tired to just kill people because of your hatred? It doesn't matter anymore how righteous you are. I don't understand anything you were saying. Those lofty ideals and mighty thoughts... they don't matter at all. All I want to here is just one thing."

*Have you finally figured it out?* She asked.

"Stop killing the innocent, asshole."

In fact, Mina didn't have all this free time to chat away. Her body felt so heavy, as if she was having a bad flu. Even moving her finger required a lot of effort. Her entire body was fatigued. Mina felt that even her life energy was running low. She was merely a toy who had burnt through all of her cogs.

But even so...

Before she completely stopped moving and her life ended...

She wanted to kill this person. Mina gave up all other happiness just for this. She discarded all her peaceful wishes in this crumbling world, her desire to stay next to someone, and her desire to eat delicious snacks one more time.

No matter what, her life should have come to an end many years ago from starvation. She should use her life now as she desired. She would slaughter for revenge, slaughter for this foolishness that no one will praise her for.

The black snake coiled around her wrist - Takamikado Mitaka's true form - opened his eyes and looked towards Mina.

"... Mina, are you okay?"

"Oh. Ah. Where should I start? I'm feeling really pumped up!"

Mina had been lost in thought, but now she was feeling very revitalized due to Mitaka's concern. She gripped her spray cans tightly and stared ahead. Although she honestly hoped Mitaka would head towards Tatsue now, she would need Mitaka's ability to detect the enemy's aura if the enemy escaped again.

Yes, he was the monster known as the Snake. Mina didn't know very much about the details concerning such monsters and what they originally were. All she had were pieces of information from her own experience and from rumors.

Monsters find it easy to detect other monsters' auras.

They would usually conceal their own traces. It was hard for normal people to detect them.

They would also disintegrate into a mist after they die.

Their goal was to devour humans.

Those things were appearing again and again after Mina fought Eguriko.

Those monsters became like this after they absorbed power from endless Apples.

And now, were they gathering in the school because they wanted to devour God as well?

Were they similar to the Greater Fragments of God too? Were they also a part of some construction that shouldered some role in this world? But then, what would be their goal?

Ah, it wasn't the time to think about these monsters now. It didn't matter anymore, whether God was being devoured or the world getting completely annihilated. It was enough to just finish off this nemesis before her, this bitch who cruelly killed her sister.

She didn't even get to speak words to farewell with her sister. Mitsuki just disappeared. Her sister should have obtained happiness. She should have a long life. She was someone Mina always wanted to protect, the person she wanted to protect the most.

Mina quietly observed the opponent facing her.

Perhaps Moon accelerated the speed with which the world was crumbling and caused this current situation. She was the root of all evil. Mina was arrogant enough to want to become God, and planned endless actions to achieve that. In fact, there were far more people than Mitsuki who died due to Mina. Mina was the most cruel enemy, the true criminal in this world, the final boss.

That was how it should have been.

However, this woman standing there facing her just looked like someone ordinary.

She was in her twenties, or perhaps even younger, probably at the same age as Mina. However, it was difficult to ascertain the age of an immortal just from appearances. She was pretty, and looked very thin and slender from excessive mental exertion. Her incredulously long purple hair was brushed neatly behind her head, and there were complicated braid and knots in it. She was wearing a glittering dress fit for a performance.

She exhibited a sort of nobility and beauty completely incongruous with the night school. She didn't look like a monster at all. There were no scary fangs or sharp antennae coming out of her. She was just an ordinary human. She stood alone in the corner of the crimson world, looking as if she was just like Mina.

"You..."

Mina suddenly wanted to say something. This woman was no monster. She should still be able to communicate with her. She at least wanted to hear the other woman's thoughts and her reasons behind killing Mitsuki. Also she wanted to know the reasons behind everything Moon did and the purpose behind destroying the entire world. She won't agree with the other's viewpoint after hearing these reasons and goals and purposes, nor would she decide to spare her life, but she would at least understand her actions. It was just like how the families of murder victims always wanted to know the criminal's intention.

At least she wanted to know why Mitsuki died. Mitsuki would not be able to rest in peace if she was not killed due to those lofty goals.

"Sterilization Disinfection."

The enemy suddenly walked expressionlessly towards her. The mood became tense. Mina's skin tingled as if a slight pulse of electricity was passing through her, and she instinctively put up a pose to fight back. Then, some unpleasant words passed into her hearing, and she stiffened.

"Say my name."

"...?"

Mina entered into battle mode and tried to find her opponent's mistakes. However, it was as if her enemy had been fully prepared. Moon completely suppressed her former madness and now spread a heavily killing intent, making

Mina shiver all over.

However, the words Moon said were strangely tainted with a sense of loneliness.

"Do you know my name? Try say my name. Hey, I'm not just called 'you'. I have a proper name. Do you know that?"

" Ultimate Shield The Weakest."

"That's my duty. I am neither the devil or the fake prophet."

Moon spread her arms as if she was dancing and twirled while smiling. Mina had never seen such an innocent smile. It was as clear and pure as a movie star in a photo, and it was more incredulous than that of a puppet.

"The genius magician, Moon Rainbow."

She tenderly gave her name and made an elegant bow.

"Well, Moon is actually a very ordinary person. 'Genius magician' was just a title. 'Rainbow' was just my surname. This ordinary Moon, however, is actually a beautiful Moon, an incredible Moon. I will kill you here, and kill God as well, and become the one to dominate this world."

Moon lowered her head deeply as if she was performing. Her body was bent beyond ninety degrees.

And she was bending more, more, and more -

"A pleasure to meet you... Now die."

With a whoosh, Moon got into a headstand with her legs in the air. She used her hands to prop up her body and waved her legs around.

Her feet started to stretch more and more, and viciously attacked Mina. They were sharp like blades, and their attacks were as precise as a martial arts master. They moved and danced in the air as if they were scythes.

"-"

Mina's reactions slowed as she faced this incredible attack. Her opponent's attacks soon made contact with her body. Blood spurted out of her as the blades grazed her shoulder. Mina rolled on the ground, then stood up, fumbling. At that

time, the opponent's feet also attacked her, nimble as whips.

The area that Moon's feet swept across was slashed up, followed by a powerful torrent of air. It would be very dangerous if Moon landed an attack head on.

There were about ten meters between them. It wasn't far, but it was a bit too much for Sterilization Disinfection. It wasn't within Mina's effective range. Even if her attacks, delivered with all her power, managed to reach the enemy, it could be dodged easily. Moreover, with Mina's current stamina, it was impossible for her to attack continuously.

Her only chance was to attack with everything she had the moment an opportunity for a sure kill arose.

Even if she was covered in wounds, Mina could still think calmly.

"Haha. If you're feeling surprised with this kind of attacks, then you'll soon be dead!"

Following the delighted yell that Moon gave out, her body was also enveloped by a red light. She was soon fused with the surrounding scenery and became completely invisible. Of course, those two rapidly-moving legs also disappeared.

"Observe, the art of the chameleon!"

Shit. Mina immediately realized what was going on. It would be impossible to dodge Moon's attacks. Not only was Moon still as quick and dangerous as before, it would be impossible to counter her if she was fully invisible.

"Mina, jump to the right!"

Mina quickly jumped away from the attack after Mitaka warned her. A huge amount of dust stirred up at the place where she was. She would have been killed if she stayed here.

"Oh... You seem to have a reliable partner. If you can detect my presence, then invisibility becomes pointless."

Moon then showed herself and shook her head in a bored way. She suddenly stretched her hands forward and made a grotesque smile. Mina also figured out a way to defeat the other woman just then, even if it meant losing her own life.

Those monsters were usually pawns who can only move in straight lines. While Gankyū Eguriko and Melodia Noise Tear Song were both powerful enemies, Mina knew something about their limited abilities, and have figured out a few ways to counter them.

However, Moon… this Greater Fragment named Ultimate Shield The Weakest…

It was impossible to interpret her movements. It was no bluff that this Fragment was the most powerful in a melee fight.

“I’ll show you a fun trick.”

Moon twisted her hands backwards and made a move to throw something. Mina’s acute sight saw something incomprehensible – she definitely saw it.

Moon’s fingers flew out.

Of course, there were ten fingers on Mina's hands, but they became detached with the powerful centrifugal force she created. There was no blood. It was just disgusting. Mina instinctively felt disgusted and jumped far away from where she stood.

Mina immediately realized her decision was correct.

Moon’s fingers exploded the moment it touched the ground. A purgatorial flame and the torrential storm it stirred up rapidly engulfed the entire school. A bomb? What was this thing? Should she go hide somewhere? Mina ran quickly away as she considered this. If they kept up this back-and-forth fight, she would certainly be thoroughly defeated before her opponent’s overwhelming strength. This need to be finished soon.

“How was it? Was it fun? Magicians don’t get praised for revealing the truths behind our tricks. But this definitely wasn’t a hidden bomb!”

Mina suddenly approached her opponent and gave out a powerful kick. It would be enough to snap even a tree. Mina targeted Moon’s head. If she landed the hit, then Moon’s neck would be snapped instantly, and even her head would fly away. But Moon didn’t guard herself at all and only replied, sounding full of herself:

“ Ultimate Shield The Weakest’s power is the modification of the flesh. I even can make my

body into a bomb.”

There was a thud, a dense and heavy sound. Mina’s flying kick landed straight on Moon’s head, but her entire leg felt numb due to a powerful kickback. It was almost like she kicked a block of steel – steel?

“My body will become something heavy when I’m defending. No matter how enduring an immortal’s body is, you can’t stand more impact than steel, right?”

Then, just like a magician, Moon casually wriggled the fingers she regenerated and started to count.

“1, 2, 3!”

The magician Moon Rainbow instantly exploded. The shards of blood, flesh, skin, and bones somehow became some inky-black and alien substance, and exploded. The powerful blast of air stirred up all the debrisand scattered them everywhere. The pieces of flesh became hard as iron, and embedded themselves into Mina’s entire body like they were the shards of a bomb, and blew her far away.

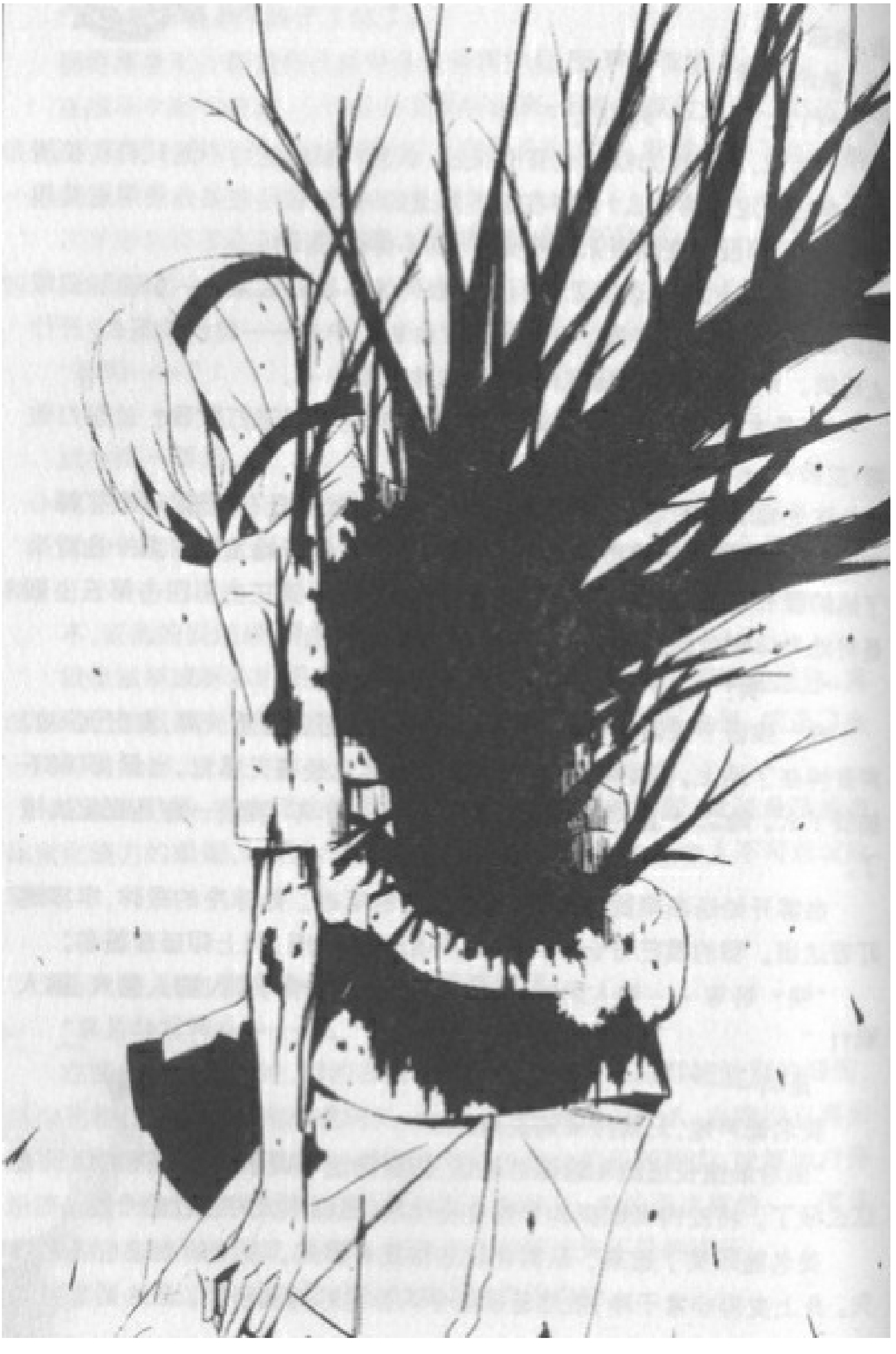
“Ahhhhhhhhh-----!”

The pain was excruciating, and the surprise even more so. Mina rolled on the ground in order to protect Mitaka, then moaned painfully as she lay prone on the ground. Her entire body felt hot and blood was pouring out. She could not gather her strength at all.

She didn’t think Moon could actually explode.

“You didn’t think I would actually do it? It’s a magician’s most earnest wish to invoke the audience’s doubt.”

The pieces of flesh, speaking casually as if she was joking, bundled up together in a repulsive way and reconstructed Moon’s appearance. Even her original clothing reappeared. It was really astounding.



Mina coughed painfully and spat out spit tinted with blood. She spent all her strength just to stand up.

"What's wrong… what are you spacing out for? How do you want to die, Ultimate Shi
The Weakest?"

"That's my line, Sterilization Disinfection. You should have been dead since a long time ago."

Ultimate Shield The Weakest put up a repulsive attitude. Completely unscathed, Ultimate Shield
The Weakest lowered her head to look at Mina, who was covered in wounds.

"You fought Gankyū Eguriko, then you allowed your head to be knocked off, then you were involved in fighting Unpleasant Counter-Current in the Eternity Institute. And now you are STILL alive after fighting continuously with my monsters… ahhh, so annoying. This is very repulsive and interfering– you bitch."

"I meant to stop you, so it makes sense that I'm hindering you."

The two spray cans rolled on the ground and moved up to Mina like magnets – Mina stretched out her hands and grabbed them tightly.

"I'm used to your taunts now, Ultimate Shield The Weakest. I won't feel it no matter how much you yell at me."

"Stop boasting. I feel a bit attached to you though. Surprisingly, I feel that we might a bit similar. That's why we don't look each other eye to eye. You asshole are the same as me, but you are not trying to climb higher and are content with a boring way of life."

*Boring – ahh, is that how it was?* Mina thought. Even though her entire body was covered in wounds and they were very painful, she still put up her pose and stood firmly. She puffed out her chest and stretched her hands out straight in front of her, and stubbornly stopped her opponent.

She panted and took deep breathes.

She righted the tilted gas mask on her face. That was her battle dress. If she was still an ordinary human, then she should have been depressed from all this cruel fighting. She must become the invincible ability user, Sterilization Disinfection. Mina was very very weak now. If she didn't hypnotize herself and

pretended to be invincible, then she might not even be able to stand here because of all her sorrows.

Mitsuki, her cute sister. She was the only family member who never discarded Mina until the end when they were still humans. Perhaps it would be a stretch to say they relied on each other, but Mina was happy. She was very very happy.

She wanted to avenge Mitsuki. Although Mina was a clumsy and a shame of a sister, she still wanted to avenge Mitsuki to the best of her ability. It was useless no matter how much she regretted and sighed. Perhaps revenge was equally worthless. However, Mina was could not place the world and the people in it, whom Mitsuki had loved, in jeopardy.

Mina wanted to kill Moon and stop her plans. That was how Mina would repent her sins.

“There are decisive differences between us. Yes, we are both confident and arrogant women. We are both silly and despicable. However, the entire world despises you.”

Just like how Mitsuki always said it, Mina said in a low and genuine voice:

“I love this world.”

She said this more straightforward that she thought.

“I love all the people.”

Saibara Mina confessed in the school grounds filled with crimson light, as if she was trying to confirm something. Moon’s face was full of a surprised expression. Yes, someone so similar to her actually said things Mitsuki wouls say. It was astounding.

However –

Mina smiled. She looked arrogant, and also as if she despised herself, and shrugged.

“I really did end up loving it all. It was all thanks Mitsuki. I’ve been very happy lately, although only for a short period of time. Looks like the world is about to end. Perhaps this is not a Good Ending. However, I can now understand what someone like you thinks, even though you are an eyesore and are very

annoying.”

They were so similar, yet they were each other’s nemesis – Mina declared towards this woman, who was so similar to how she used to be:

“However, even though I may come across the worse end, I won’t deny the happy days we used to have. We’ve lived very happily. That is an irrefutable fact. That would be enough.”

She recalled the days she spent living with Mitsuki. It was really just full of silly and stupid things. She was always getting yelled at for not doing housework or for drinking too much. She had always ranted to Mitsuki whenever she met something unhappy at work, and she asked Mitsuki to rub her shoulders and pour drinks for her, so that she can be consoled.

Mitsuki… her smiles, which sparkled with light, saved Mina.

It was so good to have been alive. Mina recalled those easy and free days.

Mina had changed too. She was once a woman who curled up in a tidy and clean room, and refused everything and would rather die from starvation. She managed to grasp the small and happy hand that was stretched towards her. That was enough.

*We were happy once. No one can deny that.*

“What are you talking about… I don’t understanding what you saying, Sterilization Disinfection.”

The extremely uneasy woman named Ultimate Shield The Weakest whispered. She had said that she would become God. If this world was a story, then God was an existence akin to the author. Moon was only given a lonely and boring role in this despicable story. Therefore, she would never acknowledge this story. She wanted to destroy and discard this world, beat up the author, then write the story instead of Him. This would be a story where she alone would enjoy happiness.

That would be pointless.

Not only was it pitiful, it was also empty.

“If you still don’t get it, then I’ll explain it to you simply.”

Blood dripped down and slithered past Mina's feet. Her body was getting colder, and she couldn't help but feel a chill. She felt she may really die this time. However, she didn't feel terrified at all. It was rather incredible.

"If you can't become God… Then you cannot be happy."

Words were unnecessary now. Mina had no more energy to chatter. She talked so much. It was not like her at all.

"So silly—"

No matter how happy Moon would become, she was still a fragile human. It was so pitiful. No one ever told Moon she could be happy even if she does not become God. As long as someone gave her some smiles, or had a good chat with her, then she would not have deviated so far.

Or perhaps, Moon was the one who completely shattered others' smiles mercilessly, and kept living in such a mistaken way?

That would be very, very, pitiful. Mina wanted to stop Moon. She wanted to stop this person, who was so similar to how Mina was before and denied everyone else. Mina had escaped all contact, and stubbornly wanted to be perfect.

Moon misunderstood the meaning of happiness. Her mad and crazed thoughts were spreading and tainting her heart. It was making her mind more clouded and was eating her away.

"Sterilization Disinfection – let me do it."

Mina put Mitaka on the ground there, and sprang forward with rapid steps in order to end everything. She aimed at her enemy in a straight line and stretched the spray cans in her hands forward, and gave a blow with all her might. She will use this to decide the outcome of the battle. She can't delay this any further. She gathered the last of her strength. She could no longer hear what Mitaka was screaming next to her.

Moon could no longer move. She only looked down at Mina with a look full of hatred. She truly hated this word. The most unfortunate thing that happened to this woman was that she obtained "The Weakest.

“I won’t pity you, so you don’t need to look so pitiable! I won't question myself no matter how others praised me or envy me! Even if someone said I was doing it all wrong and denied everything that I am, I still will move forward without rest and crash through all obstacles!”

Countless weapons instantly burst out of Moon, as if all her hatred just materialized. Like what she said, she wanted to completely destroy this world so not even a trace of it would left. Nails, thorns, blades, halberds, iron poles, and dynamite all flew out, as if they were the fangs and claws that will devour the world. The weapons circled and flew, merging into each other and scattering, stabbing and slashing, rioting as if they would destroy everything.

Many weapons landed straight into Mina’s body. She received multiple lethal and irreparable wounds. Mina’s life was all but spent.

Mina kept moving forward and forward and forward towards her enemy. She broke into a sprint, and the blood that scattered from her danced in the air like wings.

Mina slammed into Moon and pushed her to the ground in an embrace. She then put her spray can to Moon’s forehead. Her body was covered with sticky stuff. Mina was feeling confused and fuzzy, but she won’t miss at such a close distance.

“… How?”

Ultimate Shield

The Weakest, Moon, had shot all her weapons into the air. There were tears in her eyes. Moon's face was still covered in that despicable expression, that never-changing expression of pretending to be tough. But she was showing her weakness now. Perhaps that was who she truly was.

“Why are you hindering me? I just want to be happier and get more praises. I just want other people to like me more. I just want everything to be better! Isn’t that right? Hey, say your opinions if you have them! Asshole, you’re so silent! You’re so annoying! You annoying bitch! Piece of shit! Everyone who’s hindering me is a piece of shit! Die! All of you, die! Die!”

“You are really childish.”

Mina’s voice was very weak. Her left thigh seemed to have been wounded

severely. There was also a wound in her abdomen. Her right eye was completely blind and probably already punctured, and blood kept flowing out.

“You were not happy – because of how you are.”

Mina shook as she hugged those slender shoulders, and pressed down on the nozzle of the spray can.

- Puuuuuff.

“Repent about the way you’re living before you hate others.”

Mina looked at the other woman’s eyes, which were burning from rage, and pressed firmly down on the spray can’s nozzle.

That was when Mina’s body stiffened completely.

“Big sister…”

It was her sister, Mitsuki. Her dear family member, who should have died, was now in front of her. No, this was a fake created by The Weakest’s ability to Ultimate Shield change her appearance—

“Don’t kill me★”

Mina’s fingers froze, petrified, just because of that one sentence. Those few brief seconds of hesitation was an unmissable opportunity for enemy. That fake, who looked like she was about to cry, suddenly showed a cruel and evil expression, and silently embraced Mina, who was immobile, tightly.

“—”

Countless thorns of flesh suddenly erupted from Moon's body and pierced through Mina.

Blood spluttered everywhere.

As if they were encased in ancient torture devices, as if they were loving sisters – the two of them embraced each other in silence, not moving at all.

Fresh blood flew down in droplets. Mina's entire body was covered in blood. For some reason, Moon Rainbow recalled her previous memories.

That rain of sulfuric acid, which completely ended her age of glory. That cold, icy liquid burning her face. That gloomy rain which erased all the aura of happiness on the stage, that extremely despicable existence. However, there would always be a rainbow following the storm. Moon was a firm believer of that.

Even if she felt pain now, she needed to be strong and endure it, and keep trying her best. If she kept this up then one day – one day for sure – she would be repaid.

She firmly believed in it. No – she was praying for it.

Therefore, she carved the words 'Rainbow' into her name.

There would definitely be a place where one can see a clear sky and beautiful rainbows on the other side of a life full of darkness and sorrow.

That was her belief. Or put it simply, it was her delusion. This world was not fair.

Things like rainbows –

– Will never appear no matter how long one waits for it.

"That was tough… it's finally over."

Moon mumbled in a low voice after she pierced through every inch of Mina's body, who was leaning against her weakly.

Moon's mood would improve when she won battles. Although things like rainbows were still very far away, Moon was already finding this very depressing world – as if it was in never-ending rain – unendurable.

It was full of darkness no matter where she went, and the dank feeling was incredibly disgusting – this world was extremely unpleasant.

“Yes –”

At that moment.

At that instant.

During that split second, Mina – the enemy whom she thought she had killed – shattered her body into tiny pieces.

No, to put it accurately, she spread out.

Mina's body was staked tightly and rendered immobile as if it was an insect made into a specimen, yet it changed into particles of mist before Moon’s eyes. It was a scene as if Mina was a vampire who turned into a mist of blood, or a swarm of insects.

It scattered so rapidly that it was impossible to capture. In other words – even Ultimat

The Weakest, who was most knowledgeable with the alternations of flesh, found this to be completely incomprehensible. How could there be such an incredible phenomenon?

“Could it be…”

A low and weak voice came from somewhere in the blood mist:

“It was very tough… indeed.”

As Mina said this, Moon’s right hand was completely consumed. The skin, flesh, and bone all rapidly evaporated and disappeared the moment it came into contact with the blood mist. Also – why didn’t her right hand regenerate? Ultimate Shiel

The Weakest had even greater regenerative powers compared to other immortals. Even if she was completely broken into pieces and all her flesh became scattered, she should be able to rapidly recover to her previous appearance. That was how it should have been – but for some reason, no matter how much she prayed for it, the consumed right hand remained absent.

This was – an attack that erased the opponent indiscriminately.

How could this be?! She could not understand this at all. It was completely out of her expectations. This – could this kind of attack be…

Sterilization Disinfection?

“Type C – The End.”

Moon didn’t know about this. She had never heard of this kind of abilities. Weren’t there only two abilities for Sterilization Disinfection, that of erasing existences and petrifying existences? Perhaps she had used other abilities without Moon’s knowledge. Could it be that Moon did not know of it because she was not there to see it?

Moon was powerless towards these uncertainties, so boring and annoying - only the lowest of the villains in things like dodgeball would get hit by them - was she one of those villains? No way. It was such a basic attack. This kind of attack...

"You're so foolish! You want to defeat me with this kind of attacks? You want to defeat Moon Rainbow - "

Those were her last words. Her opponent was prepared to die and did not waver at all. Mina targeted the doubt in Moon's heart and evaporated Moon's entire body with extraordinary cruelty, making Moon go mad. The first hit aimed at Moon's waist and right leg. The second hit chose her shoulders and chest. And the third, the fourth, and the fifth wiped out large portions of what was left of Moon's body.

" - Huh?"

Her head, the only intact piece of her body, twirled and fell to the ground with a dull thud. Moon was dumb. Her body felt nothing. Of course, she was nothing more than a head. She could not believe this at all. Was this the end? No. There must be something wrong here.

The mist of blood gathered together slowly and formed Saibara Mina's figure. Her icy cold eyes were fixed on Moon. Moon opened and closed her mouth a few times and blinked ceaselessly, looking up at Mina.

"Huh? Wait... You've got to be joking. Huh? Why can't I move? No way no way no way no way?!"

"Yes - "

Mina said in a low, spiritless voice.

"This is the only way to conclusively kill  The Weakest, who was most adept at running away and camouflage. One must completely tear apart its flesh and bones, even though such actions don't go well with my personality."

Mina then laughed. The bloodstains on her body disappeared the moment she recovered from her evaporated form. She was pristine. She was a startling beauty. If Moon were to die while looking at such a beautiful woman -

Hold on hold on hold on!

She can't die! How can she die? She can't die like this!

She was a woman who will become God. How can she possibly die here? *Lies. All this is a lie!*

"... This is it. Huh - Mitaka?"

Mina smiled at the black snake crawling towards her, and shrugged her shoulders in a self-deprecating way.

"People never feel satisfied with failure."

Then Mina put her foot on top of Moon's head, which was quivering, and showed a very cruel expression.

"How does it feel to have just your head left? Isn't it inconvenient? I know that feeling too."

This most evil and most despicable woman had once decapitated Mina. Could such an intricate web of hatred be completely sated with simply defeating Moon? No no, that won't do at all. Moon mistakenly thought she had killed Mina when she knocked off Mina's head. Moon then felt it would be a waste to discard Mina's body, and prepared to recycle it as a headless corpse. Moon also -

Mina toyed with Moon to her heart's content, then she lifted up her head towards the school building and sighed. Mina's body started to crumble little by little, starting from the tip of her fingers and the ends of her hair.

Like an ancient doll, Mina's hands detached from her wrists and smashed to

pieces on the ground.

Yes. She didn't know just how much energy she spent in the attack, but it should be the end. Moon was already dead. Mina fought to a standstill with her. Mina still struggled and wanted to keep living, but she was quite satisfied. It was obvious who was the victor.

It was disgusting.

Moon was already an unbearable existence. At least Mina managed to get that woman to die in despair.

Dressed in pristine white, Mina was abnormally beautiful in this world dyed with crimson. She ignored Moon completely and spoke to Snake next to her:

"... Mitaka, thanks. I found her thanks to your help - and I've revenged Mitsuki. Hurry to Tatsue-san's side now."

She could not hear what Snake said in reply. It was too faint. Only tears fell down from her eyes. Mina looked at all this as she slowly disappeared, as if she was a ghost. The spray cans dropped to the ground.

Little by little, Saibara Mina disappeared.

Her entire existence shattered. She died without leaving anything behind.

She should have felt lonely. She should have felt unsatisfied. However, Mina had a relaxed expression as if she had finally shed a great weight.

"Everyone is dead. Everyone had crumbled. There should be one pair of lovers who can happily live on in this world approaching its end. Just like how a long time ago, when the great flood destroyed the entire world, Noah and his wife were entrusted with the hope of God to create the future."

It sounds odd if I'm the one to say it - Mina smiled and slowly spread her arms.

"Thank you, Mitaka. You, me, and Mitsuki, and Tatsue-san - I won't forget the time we spent together even if I die. Ah, right - "

The white-haired beauty let go of her gas mask and showed a beautiful smile. She looked graceful and gentle. There were no regrets regarding the days she had lived, and she felt no regret at dying here. There was only an expression of pure nobility.

"It's not bad."

After saying this final sentence, Saibara Mina's entire body turned into sparkling red particles and disappeared.

Sterilization Disinfection - Saibara Mina.

She had fallen into confusion multiple times, made many mistakes, and had kept losing what was most important to her. She was such a stupid woman. And at the end - she was smiling sweetly and was very happy.

It was so infuriating.

Moon could hear Snake's screams. Moon couldn't understand that at all. For some reason, she hated and despised those words. There was also envy, jealousy, and she wanted to curse endlessly as she thought this. She wanted to curse everyone, Mina, Snake, herself, the world, and God. Her heart was full of hatred, rage, and curses.

She actually got such a pitiful end.

She would definitely not allow others to become happy.

She ended up in such a despondent way.

But that woman actually managed to die in such satisfaction. Such a bitch.

She was so jealous. So, so, so jealous.

This wasn't fair. This world was not fair at all. Moon was trying so hard, but why was she still unhappy? This was unfulfilling. Not fulfilling at all. It was so disgusting that she wanted to throw up.

Moon spent the last of her energy and grew some small legs from her intact head, as if she was an insect. She galloped towards the door of the school building, running rapidly and completely ignoring her image. She wanted to run as far as possible, leave this place as quickly as possible. Moon had already lost her heart, her vessel, and her body may break down at any time. The stone she took from Single Room was also destroyed by Mina and completely disappeared. It was only a matter of time before Moon was absorbed and consumed by the red light.

This was terrifying, but it was not the time for the end. Yes, she couldn't die

now. If she didn't want to die, then there would still be a possibility of turning this around. Those immortals, Apple-Holders, they were still out there. She could get a bit of nutrients if she were to eat them. She would be able to grow more of her body again. Things like goals were already pointless now. She just wanted to keep living and live longer.

Because she was still not satisfied!

There was still a long way to go. She was not - not satisfied at all!

"Ha... Ha... Ha..."

She was going mad. She didn't know how far she had skittered. In fact, she hadn't gone very far from the school building. But her entire body - which only constituted of a monstrosity with a head and a few small insect legs coming out of it at this time - felt with a certainty that she would soon face annihilation. Her existence was clearly disappearing little by little. It was disgusting. This kind of feeling was unbearable. How could Mina die with a smile on her face?

Moon didn't understand. She didn't understand. She did nothing wrong, so she should become happy. There was no way that she would be finish here, but why was her brain feeling so anxious? It was scary. So scary, so scary. Did she fail somewhere? Why must she endure such a cruel sensation?

Why why why why?

"This world..."

A dry sound was suddenly heard.

A disgusting feeling rouse up within Moon, and she lifted up her head forcibly to look up.

"There are too many melancholic things."

His clothes was rather dirty. His fringe was long and hid that angular face under it. He held a gun, and the gun was pointed to the spot between Moon's brows. She had seen this man before. That was why such a horrible feeling welled up within her.

Right. This person should be the detective who lived with Aizawa Ume. Her investigation yielded the result that he had a deep hatred towards monsters as his lover was killed by monsters.

Huh?

But why was he pointing his gun at her, when she looked so human?

"I'm sorry."

The man made a shrill sound as if he was melding iron. Those words had no emotions except horror.

"I... hate you monsters. I don't feel that much hatred, but go die."

"Mon - Monster??"

Moon screamed with all the strength left in her.

"I'm not a monster!"

She was not a monster! Did he not know who he was speaking do? It was infuriating! He was nothing better than trash. He didn't realize Moon's value at all. He did not pay attention to her at all. He was a stupid and dumb worm! She must kill him! She will kill him with no mercy, and rip him to shreds! Everyone! Everyone! She will kill everyone who does not realize how powerful she is! Kill them kill them kill them kill them -"

"You look like this, and yet you're a human?"

His eyes were clear and full of justice, just like mirrors of truth. The person those eyes reflected was just a disgusting creature, a bare head with a few insect legs growing out of it.

*Huh?* Moon thought about this. *How did this happen?*

As she remained silent, the man's fingertips tightened and was ready to pull the trigger.

Ah.

Indeed, the entire world hated Moon. They all hated her. Destiny, God, and these trash all hated her. It was such a pointless life that she had. There was no light or warmth at all. It was the worst. It was repulsive. It was rage-inducing. Everyone should die and completely disappear.

At the last minute - for some reason - she saw the smile of Aizawa Ume, that girl she had killed. Ume was smiling sweetly at Moon's remaining corpse, calling him 'Zekiguchi-san' over and over with her sweet voice.

She should be disappearing soon. She just felt very angry and sad. She wanted to swear at people, to cuss at people -

"This is it?"

The Queen who hated all things had the appearance of a witch. She screamed as she looked into the barrel of the gun.

"Is this what you call justice, O God?!"

The bullet was fired and hit Moon. Blood spluttered out and the world started to become fuzzy. Moon Rainbow, the genius magician, was killed by those who considered her a monster.

Sakaki Guryū snapped his head up, thinking that he heard the sound of gunfire and a strange, dying scream.

The tall blond man had a well-structured figure and elegant appearance, but he was now covered from head to toe in mud and blood, and his beauty was completely covered up.

The man in black took away Rinne. Then his mother, whom he had considered to be dead, appeared before him again. Sakaki then moved together with the detective Nagaki Kurukiyo and fought with the monsters that have appeared all around the town. It was already dusk when they defeated them all.

It was now the second day. The entire world was now covered in a red light. It

was as if a layer of crimson thin plastic was pulled over his eyes, and he was also drunk off his ass at the same time. It was as if it was the shade seen by insect eyes. It was the color of blood. The entire world looked as if it was covered in a layer of blood, but no one knew the reason behind it and could only worry uselessly. He had no idea where Rinne was, either. Sakaki wasn't someone who could sense other people's presence.

"What happened, detective? There was a gunshot - "

"Nothing..."

Nageki stood up slowly and put the gun back under his jacket as if nothing happened. The corpse of a small monster laid next to his feet. Perhaps they would meet more alien big ones and become mired in battle in the future. They couldn't let down their guard.

"But what exactly is happening?"

Nageki said 'nothing' nonchalantly and changed the topic. Yes. Sakaki couldn't say that he had gotten used to this ridiculous situation, yet he was not driven out of his mind, nor was he philosophical enough to take everything as it came and pay no mind to what was happening. He just hated it very much and kept sighing.

Just where was Rinne?

"Almost everyone in this town is dead, but monsters were roaming everywhere without fear... is this the end of the world? Are we - the only ones still alive?"

Nageki only muttered casually, not expecting Sakeki to reply.

"Seriously. What was happening? Why are there so many bothersome things all the time? People like me would feel happy as long as we live quietly. Why is life getting so messy with such odd events?"

"Don't ask me. Besides, even if I heard your complaints, I can't calmly figure anything out. Shut up if you feel upset."

The town was completely empty. The world was completely covered by red. Every corner of this space was full of an empty and hollow feeling. Sakaki just stood around in a daze.

Really - it seemed so far away now, when he was talking about the future with Rinne. Those happy days were so far away now. What happened push the path of events towards this most cruel end? Just where did they go wrong to make the world such a decrepit place?

"...Um?"

He heard footsteps. Those were very soft sounds, but it was particularly clear in this silent and empty town. As if Sakaki's heart was suddenly disturbed, he felt some strange emotions. He then turned back quietly.

When Sakaki turned around, he saw -

The girl who grasped a spoon tightly in her left hand was standing there.

At the same time -

The girl was running in this empty town and along its crisscrossing, complicated roads. Her messy, wolf-like hair flew in the wind. Her eyes, deep like gun-barrels, was looking this way.

Sakaki didn't make any sounds. He did not know what to say. He had promised to protect Rinne, but he could do nothing but watch as she was taken from him. He felt very apologetic. He felt guilty in his heart. However, Guriko's face - showed a particularly determined and serious expression.

The girl named Gankyū Eguriko walked closer in silence. She then spoke softly with her low, innocent voice:

"Sakaki."

"Eguriko."

"Sensei."

"Don't call me Sensei at this weird time."

"I'm sorry... I went to look for her. I will look for her wherever she might be. You're a teacher, so don't make your students' lives more troublesome."

She then naturally extended her hand. She only had one hand with conspicuous pale fingers after Sterilization Disinfection took the other arm. A magnificent cutlery was grasped tightly in her thin hand. She was the girl who endured a millennium of long battles just like this.

Guriko kept her hand stretched and quickly cast her eyes towards Nageki Kurukiyo, who was looking listless next to them.

"You. Detective."

"Guriko-chan."

"Don't call me Guriko-chan."

She kept her hand outstretched as she spoke those casual words, and lifted her chin towards the direction she came from.

"You're doing great. But you're very likely to die if you approach the school. Go back to Ume. If I really can't do it, then stay next to her till the end of the world."

"Ume-chan..."

Aizawa Ume was dead. Sakaki knew this. He didn't see it, but he heard her last words. The girl died with an expression full of sorrow and apologized at the same time. Sakaki also remembered this and lowered his head in silence.

Guriko felt this. She looked rather surprised and lowered her eyes.

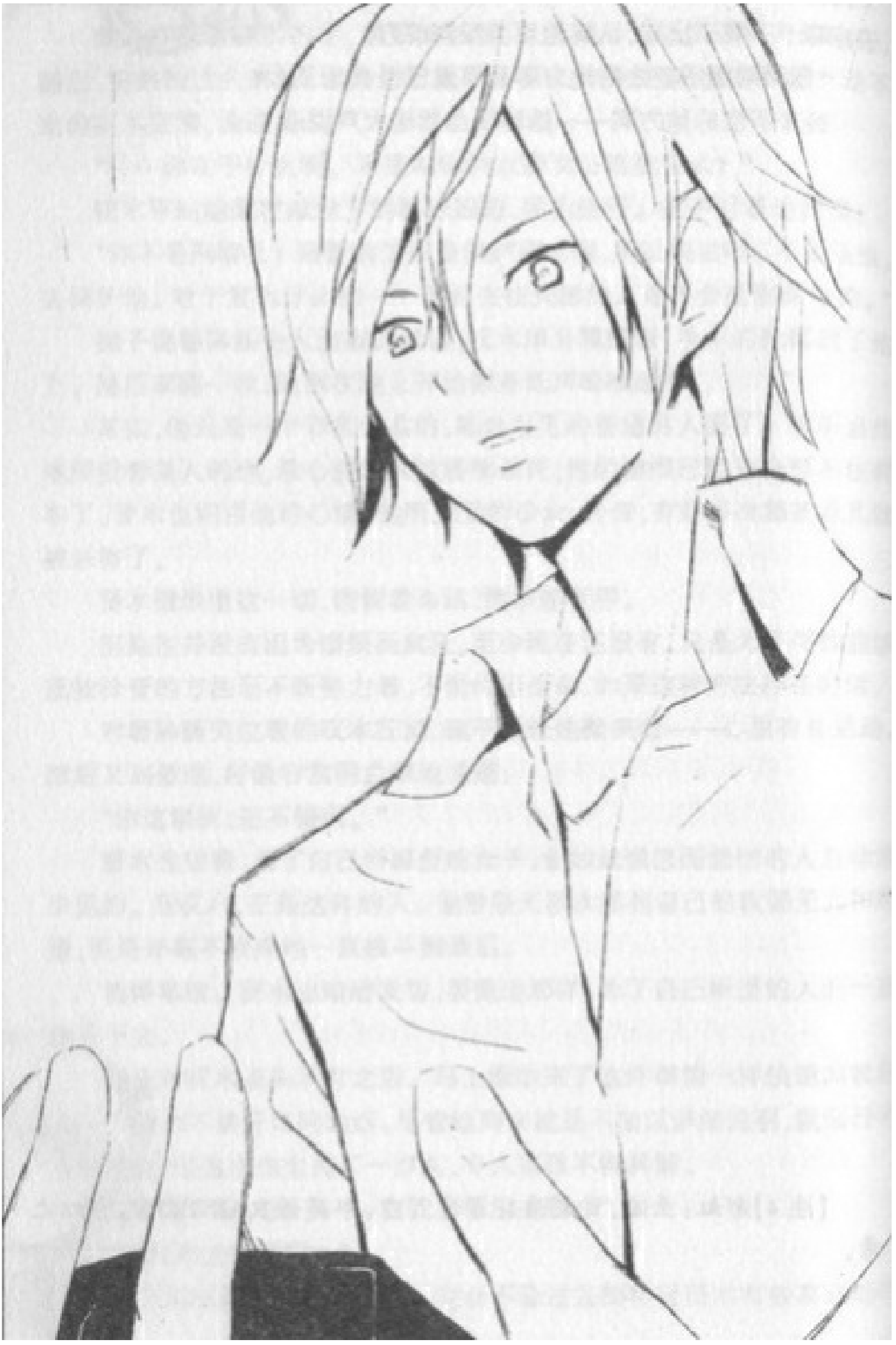
"... I see. Fine then. Hurry back to the apartment. Maybe you can manage to survive there. Perhaps that is the Noah's Ark, where one can avoid death. The stability of the structure is a bit concerning, but it was somewhere Rinne had lived - so maybe it will stay safe until the end of all things."

"Rinne?"

Nageki only made a sound because he responded to this name. He did not understand what Guriko said at all. Guriko looked as if her message was already received. She took her eyes off Nageki Kurukiyo and grabbed Sakaki's hand

violently, then placed something into his hand.

"?"



A sparkling red gemstone was in his palm. It was a solid color, as if it was a droplet of blood that suddenly stopped flowing. It was very light in weight, but it made a powerful impression.

"Guriko, this...?"

"We're running out of time. I'll explain on the way."

She grabbed Sakaki's hand tightly. Her small figure ran forward quickly. Then she suddenly turned her head and looked at Nageki Kurukiyo, who still stood immobile and had an intense expression, and said:

"What are you doing? Didn't I tell you to hurry back to the apartment?"

The eyes Nageki usually kept hidden under his fringe suddenly snapped open. Guriko then said:

"Aren't you a detective? A detective's job is to protect other people, so go. No matter who the person might be, protect him or her. As for revenge - that won't make those who are already in Heaven happy."

Guriko said those sad words. Nageki's entire body shook and the gun in his hand fell to the ground. Then his knees wobbled, and he knelt on the ground and bowed down in a low sob.

He was only a very gentle and ordinary man. He loved someone, but his most beloved was killed by monsters. His rage was already beyond his capacity to stop it. Sakaki understood his feelings. Rinne, the girl he loved so much, was almost killed so many times.

Sakaki hated all this. He hated destiny and hated the world.

But he did not go mad from this hatred, at least not yet. He was only trying continuously to seek for a way to save Rinne, and he was willing to give up his life for it. Provided that such a way exists.

Guriko smiled softly as she faced Nageki Kurukiyo, who was weeping silently. She felt somewhat touched. Then she said in an arrogant tone, as if she was omniscient.

"You're not bad."

Sakaki also felt it was very rare to see a man so angry and sad for the woman

he loved. Nageki was exactly someone like this. Nageki had felt his powerlessness and despair countless times, but he did not give up and fought until the end.

Nageki was worthy of respect. Sakaki also made a silent vow to keep fighting for the person he loved, just like Nageki.

Guriko nodded towards Nageki, then ran quickly forward as if she was done with this affair. Sakaki couldn't help but ask her what was going on. Even though she had always neglected to give detailed explanations and forcibly dragged people with her, this was way too over the top, and he couldn't understand at all.

"Hey, hold on. Guriko... Where are we going?"

"Where are we going?"

Guriko was really treating him as if he was an idiot. She was completely different to before, when she had some affection for Sakaki. Her face had an upset expression. Sakaki couldn't help but furrow his brows. Right then, Guriko burst into a laugh, and pointed forward seriously.

"Our destination has been determined since a long time ago, no?"

*We are going to where Rinne is* - she said this loudly as a matter of fact.

# Epilogue 14: Poison & Apple & Kiss

*I'm dead. I'm lying on the ground with a spoon in my right eye, and it went straight into my brain and churned it all up. I died alone. My head is against the warm kotatsu. My remaining eye gazes lifelessly upwards at the ceiling, and my body is getting stiff.*

"Hate as much as you want."

I hear the innocent, crystal-clear voice of a girl. I should be dead. How am I still hear things? No. That's not surprising at all.

I'm not dead. When I gave up hope on everything and decided to die, I met Sensei, and I discovered the Apple of Miracles. That hope revived me.

"Curse as much as you want."

Knock knock.

*I can hear the sound of knocking, and that my Sensei calling out to me.* Rinne. Rinne. *He's calling for me with such a broken and desperate voice. So… ah, I need to keep on living. I need to live for longer. If I died here... then it will be very sad and lonely.*

Bam bam bam. *Rinne Rinne Rinne.*

I know, Sensei. You don't need to yell so loud. I'm fine. I'm fine. Don't cry.

Guriko-chan, don't look so sad. You didn't do anything wrong, so don't say you're sorry... If I get to live for a bit longer, then all of your wishes will be granted.

Yeah, that's right...

Just a bit longer. If I live for just a bit longer...

I saw the dream.

I saw the dream.

But I can't wallow in dreams forever. I need to wake up.

I need to keep on living.

"..."

She seemed to have fallen asleep while reading a picture book. She was lying in a transparent coffin. A thick pile of rose petals surrounded that coffin, and filled the air with their overwhelming scent. Her eyes stung a bit. Maybe she cried, but she couldn't remember why.

She was tired and couldn't stand up. She could only lay back and look up towards the pristine white space.

In her dream, she saw how Guriko killed her. It was a scene from a long time ago. So much had happened since then. Happy things, as well as sad things.

Everything around her was peaceful. Maybe this was the only place to retain peace at the end.

"... I understand."

*I keep on nodding as if I am listening intently to something.*

"I know. I know. Mmm - I know already."

She kept pretended to not see It and turning her head away. She wanted to forget It, to forget the truth hiding beneath her memories, deep within her instincts, living on the dark side of her thoughts. *I finally remember It now. I don't want to acknowledge It, because that would be too lonely. That was why I made such a peaceful place, so I can get away from those truths.*

Look. Innumerable lives have already disappeared from this world.

Look. Countless monsters having emerged. They are coming. They are approaching one after another. The entire world will soon buckle and collapse. Everyone living in this world will face death. Humanity will go extinct.

It is almost over. The countdown for the death of everything has begun.

So now I can't keep running away to retain my own peace.

"I am... God."

*My heart is full of that fresh, 'I-just-woke-up' feeling. I had to cry out. And then everything is rushing into my brain like a chain reaction. like they have waited for this for a long time. Ahh. I am no longer Usagawa Rinne. I've completely become something else. No. I am catching up to all the knowledge and memories I've forgotten. I am becoming more perfect, more divine.*

Honestly, I've forgotten countless memories. I have discarded things I longed for, just so I could keep on living in safety. But even so, it is almost over. It is about the time for the end.

This is my limit. I have reached my limit long before Guriko gouged out my eyeball - I became a Meat Doll to escape reality, to not think about anything. Then Ultimate Shield The Weakest forcibly implanted Poison Catastrophe's heart into me and woke me up. The world would have ended sooner if that hadn't happened. It was so scary.

She had always turned away and ignored everything - she was probably about to die, just like this world.

God was going to die too. She was going to die soon. That was predetermined. She only delayed it for her own enjoyment. If God died, then the world would die too, right? That would make sense. That was how a world should be.

Therefore...

"I want to keep on living..."

*So I need to try my best. I need to try my best. If I die, then everyone will disappear. I need to try and use my life force to the best of my ability. I will keep on living, no matter what happens.*

Ahh, I have to stay alive.

I have to wake up.

Ahhhhh.

The end of the world looked like a burning dusk, like the sunset of Ragnarok – that sounded really weird and awkward, but that was what it felt like. It was the end. It was the long-awaited end to an ordinary day.

They understood it instinctively. It was simple. No explanations were needed. It was the end. As the curtains of night fell smoothly down, the entire world ended completely.

The scenery before their eyes started to crumble inwards from the edge of the horizon, leaving only darkness behind. Everything, living or else, became complete nothingness. All were equal in this destruction. Incredulously, the surroundings of the apartment complex were not involved in this catastrophe. But even this section of the world would not remain much longer.

"Hey, Tatsue."

"What, Mitaka?"

Tatsue was using Dragon's Breath and making rising air currents. She used that to climb to the rooftop of the apartment complex. She then sat down and lowered her head towards the dark form cradled in her chest and calling out her name. It should have been a reptilian, cold-blooded animal, but it had an incredible sense of warmth. After all, he was a monster who defied all common sense.

She was simply gazing dizzily at this world enveloped by this dark crimson light reminiscent of the sunset. Even if she had wanted to resist the end of the world, her body felt weak. Any feelings of anxiety or restlessly would only undoubtedly making her own life difficult. She and her companion were incredibly peaceful.

They felt fine even in this desperate situation, when the overwhelming end was approaching them without a justifiable reason. Were they looking at Guriko, who was rushing towards the school? They did not even know that themselves. However, they felt that the world had not given up.

*Keep going, world! Keep going, God!* The two of them said loudly as if this had nothing to do with them. The black-clad girl lowered her head and looked down upon this scene of Armageddon.

Mitaka, who was sitting on her chest, seemed like he was considering something difficult, or seeking something abstract.

"... The past, present, and future - which one of them is the most important?"

"Oh? Well..."

Tatsue replied as if it was just in a casual chat. However, a flash of thought went through her mind. *Hope could only be expressed in the future, and you can't simply ignore the past. But honestly, you are only alive in the present.* That was difficult. Now that she thought about it, all of those times were important.

“I’ve been thinking about that ever since Gankyū Eguriko shattered my ancestor's dream..."

"You're pretty serious, Snake. I, the Black Dragon, don't really care."

Honestly, nothing mattered. It didn't matter whether the past or the present or the future was more important. Such philosophical questions did not matter. They were only mind games.

However, Mitaka felt rather differently and had considered it a lot more. He mumbled in a low voice.

"What did this clan of Snakes, who betrayed humans in the past, really expect? Were they after eternal life, or was it for something else? Did they wish to control the future, which sparkled with endless unknowns? Did they want to

accumulate more happiness for past reminiscences? Or was it just to erase the horror of death we constantly face as we live in the present?"

"Like I said..."

Tatsue took out her fan and flapped it vigorously, sending air towards her face.

"The end doesn't matter anymore, no matter how important that is. What now? What do you want to do once you have the answer to this question?

"Tatsue, the world looks like it's about to end soon. There's not much time left."

Tatsue understood that clearly, but what could she do about that? Would this guy, whose true form was a black snake, feel regretful and be apologetic if he did nothing?

"What should we do? If the future is very important, then we should strive to do what little we can to save the world. But if the past is more important, then we should sit here and talk about memories in the past."

"I am very happy right now."

Tatuse hugged Mitaka tightly and placed her lips softly on his forehead. The Snake stiffened all over.

"Isn't this enough? We keep talking about having to do this or that, but no one actually expected us to do anything. I started to despise those encouraging words ever since I found Mitsuki and you. It is enough to live however I want to. It is my own life after all."

The girl who was raised as the 'insurance' to her incredible older brother calmly collected the Snake in her right hand, and stood up slowly. Her left hand held her fan and she pointed it forward, as if she was making a declaration without a particular target in mind.

She looked splendid.

"I am very happy! So?!"

No one knew who she was asking. Tatsue didn't care about it a bit and yelled.

She was very proud.

"I am very, very - from the bottom of my heart - happy! So?!"

Then she plonked down on the roof and had a gentle smile on her face as she looked up at the sky.

"Aaah. Now that I've shown off like that, I'm completely satisfied. I'm already very happy even if I don't do anything. What should we do now? Let's play together. Mitaka, try to feel this. Try to feel this world, and the happiness of having been born onto this world!"

Tatsue breathed heavily, as if she was going to inhale this crimson world into her body. She looked at Mitaka, and Mitaka was just blankly smiling as if he wasn't alive. This was enough. Yes, Tatsue didn't want to die. But this was enough for her when the world was going to end.

As long as the person she loved was next to her, then it would be a Good End no matter how it ends.

"I am - very happy! So?!"

Tatsue narrowed her eyes and suddenly puffed up her cheeks and started to complain towards Mitaka, who was silent.

"Are you still not satisfied? I'm hugging you, and I'm telling you I'm happy. Is it still not enough? Why? Your desires have no end, Mr Snake!"

"..."

Mitaka's body immediately relaxed, and he kissed Tatsue's forehead in return as if he was replying to her. He then suddenly reverted to his human form. Tatsue blushed.

She hugged him softly and looked up towards the sky, as if she was seeking whether Heaven existed.

*Can you see us now, Mitaka?*

If we die like this, we would actually be a rather pitiful pair of lovers. *Perhaps she was somewhat jealous, but now Tatsue liked this Snake from the bottom of her heart. He was gentle, somewhat weird, and sometimes a bit annoying, but he was very honest and cute - she liked him. It was probably weird to think of these things in this dying world, however she still felt very happy.*

The two of then smiled carelessly and were happy.

"Happy! Happy!" They yelled as if they were challenging the entire world.

Finally, when their voices became hoarse, Mitaka laid down on the roof with a flop and made a big yawn. He looked to his side, and Tatsue was looking at him too. Then, as if they were trying to confirm this was indeed real, they embraced and kissed again.

They called out their lover's name with a weak voice.

"Mitaka."

"Tatsue."

The red light of Armageddon was reflecting off the glasses Mitaka wore. It was a rare moment when he could not control his expression.

It was such a rare smile. Mitaka managed it with all of his effort.

"It's great to have met you, Tatsue. I am very happy too. How is that?"

This was the end. That was clearly evident. The world was breaking down from its edges and collapsing inwards. It was an obvious fact. There were no doubt or uncertainties to that. The entire space was clearly falling and crumbling from the edges, as if liquid was overflowing the edges of a full cup.

All ended in nothingness. All things broke down and scattered. The fragments of the world were disappearing one after another into an unknown. No one knew where those broken pieces ended up. It was a bit beyond the capacities of Breaksun Hanselmine's imagination. Just as people who were about to die gradually lost their sight, she just felt a bit lonely as she gazed upon the world that was gradually moving towards oblivion.

At the end, Breaksun didn't create any relationships with anyone. She couldn't help but feel regret. She must have been used by someone as Catastrophe Poison. She wasn't sure of it. Now, after she lost her abilities, she was truly reduced to just a bystander.

Everything that happened so far in this world were very removed from Breaksun, and it welcomed the end without having anything to do with her. She was just discarded on her own on the side. She never fought with anyone, nor did she get into any kind of conspiracy. Of course, nor did she save anybody. Although Kajiri thanked her tenderly when he passed away, to be honest... she didn't do anything.

In that case, she should at least watch everything till the end. It wasn't so she can try to change something, nor was it to save people who was about to die. She felt better now she thought about it.

The only thing she could do now was to look quietly on from the side. It was as if it was the only meaning left in her life.

She hugged her knees as she sat in front of the apartment building, gazing at the crimson light that was getting brighter and brighter and the world that kept crumbling and breaking apart. An arm was suddenly stretched towards her.

Breaksun turn to see Nageki Kurukiyo, the landlord of this apartment. He passed the cigarette he held in his hand towards her.

"You wanna have a puff?"

"No. Tobacco... is not good for your health."

She had never really spoken to this person before, and was therefore rather anxious as she responded. Then, feeling ridiculous, she gave a shrug.

"What am I talking about? Everything is about to kick the bucket."

"No, no. Hehehe."

For some reason, Nageki gave out a satisfied laugh. He lit his cigarette and inhaled a puff. The smoke he exhaled was particularly pale in the red light that filled the world.

"It's not bad. This feels like those lines of poetry Akechi Mitsuhide recited before he was executed. No one can tell what will happen in the future, and the world isn't necessarily destined for destruction. If we just close our eyes briefly then open them again, then maybe everything would have returned to how it was before."

"Um..."

This person was rather optimistic, no matter what.

Breaksun closed her eyes, and Nageki said with a happy expression.

"After all, I know the world is about to fall. I am a bit dull, but I can still feel that instinctively. However, back then I felt a great threat to my resolve to keep living. I want to just let go of everything and let the world keep going like this. It should be okay until the end of everything. I thought it would be fine to be melancholic… but despair won't do."

"... I don't understand."

He mumbled in a low voice and smiled as he scratched his head.

"Yep, because I still firmly believe there will be a big turnaround at the end. There's still that kind of possibility that a super powerful miracle, the kind that would be enough to save the entire world and our future, can actually happen. I am a normal person, so I keep believing in that. You should do the same."

*You will feel a bit happier if you believe in something* - the melancholic detective said in a low voice. She could believe, but what should she believe in? God? The world? Or should she believe in Guriko, who was rushing towards the school? She was looking for the sole remaining hope left in Pandora's Box in Greek mythology. Perhaps that hope was the last piece of humanity left for those still alive.

Then she must still live like a human to the end.

"~"

Breaksun started to sing. There were no meaningful lyrics, just the appropriate notes. It was a tune without a beginning or an end. The notes were low, but there was a powerful genuine feeling erupting out of the sound.

"Ahhh -"

It was as if she discovered something very important.

"We're still alive."

Next to her, Nageki Kurukiyo was unresponsive. He only puffed out smoke satisfactorily out of his mouth. He silently listened to Breaksun's chants. Suddenly, his eyes turned to her, and he put on a very seriously expression for no reason.

"Hey, it sounds like I've heard you before. Could you be... the lady singer from *The Kingdom of Witches*? I'm... I'm your fan! I even have all of your CDs. Can I please get your autograph?"

"Huh? Eh? Me? Autograph?"

For Breaksun, Nageki's words were completely unexpected. She looked very lost. Nageki had probably wanted to say that all this time, but never had a chance. He looked extremely serious as he waited for Breaksun's answer, looking like he was just a little child.

"... Haha."

Breaksun suddenly felt a bit deflated. Other people actually heard her voice. It was completely different from before, when she was totally ignored by others.

"Ahahaha."

She kept laughing as she felt she might still be saved.

She was still alive. She was definitely living in this world.

Guriko's spoon gouged out an eyeball. She had repeated this action innumerable

times in the past thousand years. It was a habit, a cruel movement. Even Guriko did not know why she must gouge out others' eyeballs in such a carnivorous way. Guriko began to feel uncertain as she kept galloping along this road, which will lead her to save Rinne.

Perhaps Guriko was a cannibalistic monster. No, perhaps that was the foundation of her being. She became this way without being aware of it. She was a monster that lived by gnawing others' bones and flesh and sucking at their blood.

And yet, that girl embraced Guriko so tightly. That girl gently opened up Guriko's cruel and stubborn heart and bestowed love upon her. Usagawa Rinne - no matter how many lies there were in this world, her gentleness must be real.

That was a true miracle. A miracle of salvation.

Guriko had always been shy and withdrawn. Perhaps she never directly told Rinne of her gratitude.

She only indulged in Rinne's gentleness. That was Guriko's sin.

Right now, with the world about to end, it was perhaps too late even if she kept running forward at any cost. But even so -

"Get out of my way!"

Guriko annihilated hoards of monsters and ran on quickly while holding on to Sakaki's hand. They ran straight towards the school building. There was no time or need in going around and avoiding these monsters. The edges of the world was already starting to crumble. It was a scene that was the complete opposite to Genesis. The creatures originally living in the world were disappearing continuously. The sky, the ocean, and the land itself were also shrinking every second. Everything was evaporating. This was death.

The death of the world. The death of God.

Rage, emptiness, and guilt - all sorts of alien emotions rushed up in Guriko's mind and completely controlled her. She had become a demon. She mercilessly kicked away monsters that approached her. She slaughtered and defeated them all, and gouged out their eyeballs. But even so, unbelievable amounts of monsters still rushed towards them, covering up every inch of the land. All she

could see were bundles of dark monsters coming towards them. It was pointless even if she destroyed one or two.

Guriko realized this and grabbed Sakaki's hand, who was also fighting monsters using his gun.

"We're going to storm through! Sakaki, hold on to me!"

There was no more need to doubt whether she should use the Apple's power. There was no more need to fear her true form. Even if the power she used was a cursed, evil power, she cannot reach God without using it to its last drop.

She cannot meet Rinne otherwise.

"Didn't I say that you guys are pests, bastards?!"

Guriko's back burst open instantly, and thin red threads erupted out of her as if they were strands of blood. They levitated in the air and formed giant wings, which bellowed and created a mighty sound. Guriko's appearance changed at the same time. The white that symbolized reason completely disappeared from her body. Instead, like a Poisoned Apple, her body became swathed in crimson.

The body made of carapaces and ligaments swelled up and Guriko held onto Sakaki and flew up lightly.

As they lifted off the ground, the monsters looked up and bellowed angrily.

Guriko completely ignored them and took to the skies.

The first flutter of her wings stirred up a mighty storm and destroyed countless monsters on the ground. Even so, those creatures did not seem to feel fear or terror. They jumped up and waved their claws, and spat up liquids and threw up rocks in their attempts to bring down Guriko. Those creatures have resolved to die and had discarded their lives. They were only trying to fulfil their duty.

But Guriko could not allow them to do so. Perhaps she was the same as them, but now she did not care about the likes of duty anymore and simply soared in the sky according to her own will.

She flew over the monsters and the school gates, and landed with a thud on the ground within the school. A bright, crimson light was sparkling there, a light that hurt Guriko's eyes. The light pulsated as if it was a beating heart. The light

brightened and darkened as the monsters approached, and this rhythmic change brought stabbing pain to Guriko's eyes.

"Guriko, these monsters..."

Sakaki, who had no idea what was going on, looked at these creatures incredulously. He should have had several encounters with monsters, but it was his first time seeing so many of them. Guriko was the same -

"... these are Mushi."

"Mushi!?"

Sakaki yelled, looking surprised. Guriko didn't have the time to talk to him and only managed to fight back the approaching monsters while trying to edge closer to the school building.

Sakaki followed Guriko, looking utterly confused.

"But Guriko... Aren't Mushi those people with red eyes who go after Apples all the time? These monsters are nothing like the Mushi I knew."

"Mmm, I know. But these are similar to Mushi."

Guriko made this decision when Single Room told her all the truths concerning this world without reserve. Even though Guriko still felt doubtful, she knew Single Room didn't need to lie when he was lying at Death's door. She therefore accepted everything he said. But this fact - this weakest link in the chain - could not be explained by any evidence.

"Sakaki, this world is made of Good and Evil."

"Huh?"

Sakaki felt his mind was heavy, and that Guriko was treating him as if he was an idiot. Guriko was still in her transformed state and her mood was rather down. She walked forward with a pout. She arrived at the entrance of the school building, where the shoe lockers were. Everything seemed blurred because of the red light. This area was destroyed in the battle with Melodia Noise Tear Song, and it was difficult to walk through it. Even though this was their familiar school, they would probably still get lost without the map at the entrance.

Perhaps - Rinne was there.

"That's enough. Shut up and listen. What I'm going to say aren't lies or jokes. This is what Single Room, the Greater Fragment who is closest to God, told me. Don't talk even if you have doubts. Don't laugh. Don't feel sad. And don't do anything stupid. I'm gonna gouge out your eyeballs if you make me upset."

"No - I've never done anything stupid. I'm just scared that you suddenly said all these weird things."

"It's gonna get weirder from now on. We're about to arrive at our destination. I don't have time to explain everything to you now, but I'll just tell you the basics. Listen up."

Guriko felt a tinge of nostalgia as she stepped on the stairs and continued to speak.

"This world is made of Good and Evil. Good is God, and Evil are the monsters... Basically, the protagonist of the story is God, and everything that opposed Him is a monster. Would this explain what monsters are?"

"Heh. Even if I listen really carefully, I still can't get that."

"You don't get it, huh? I ain't very smart, so I probably did a bad job at explaining..."

Guriko recalled Single Room's words as she thought hard about it and kept talking.

"In conclusion - Sakaki, what do you think of when I mention 'God'?"

"God?"

"Yeah, God. You'll take forever to answer me, so I'm gonna say it for you. That omnipotent and omniscient, absolute existence. The ruler of this world. The Creator. Those are the things we regard as God, right? The person who makes the world turn. That would be God."

Guriko took Sakaki in her arms as she jumped along the collapsed corridor. All the landing points were fragile and she could barely put any force on them. It was very difficult to talk and move at the same time.

"Then why would God die?"

"Can God die?"

"He can. Actually, He is dying right now. God is the ruler of the entire world, so any changes in God would be reflected in the changes in this world. If God is upset, there will be thunder. If God feels sad, His tears will descend on the world as rain. Then if God died, these monsters would pop out and the world would crumble."

God was Good, and monsters were Evil. God was the same as the world. Monsters, which exist as Evil, must destroy God. The death of God was therefore the end of the world. Everything that was happening in this world was probably because of this phenomenon. Guriko didn't really understand, nor did she believe this a lot.

Sakaki once again looked like he couldn't understand this. He narrowed his eyes and mumbled.

"I don't understand at all. God is the same as the World? Is that how we should think? If the status of God changes, then would the state of the World change accordingly? Are you trying to say this is how we should understand the world?"

He did indeed have a quick mind. He understood her words before Guriko explained all the prerequisites of the situation. Yes. Even though there were still many questions and contradictions, they could not continue the conversation without remembering every fact all at once. This was nothing related to the laws of physics. The world was marching towards the end.

Confusion was pointless. Not understanding was different from closing one's eyes, shaking one's head, and refusing to listen.

They roughly understood everything, and they have to solve those questions.

Guriko also thought this as she fixed her eyes before her and kept running forward.

"Yes. Then – aren't there things regarded as God's Greater Fragments?"

The Greater Fragments – Sterilization Disinfection, Unpleasant Counter-Current, Single Room, Melodia Noise, Tear Song, Poison, Catastrophe, Ultimate Shield, The Weakest, and God Mushi Emperor. They each shouldered their predestined functions in this world, and they were immortals with miraculously abilities. They have always called

themselves the scattered and broken Fragments of God, but that was slightly different from the truth.

God was never scattered and broken.

God had always been here.

Every single existence in this world was a part of God. It had always been that way.

“That was what they were. They individually corresponded to the body parts of God. Sterilization Disinfection was the Digestive Organ. Unpleasant Counter-Current was the Execratory Organ. Melodia Noise Tear Song was the Sensory Organ. Poison Ultimate Shield Catastrophe was the Communication Organ. The Weakest was the Flesh and Bones. God Mushi Emperor was the Body Fluids. Single Room was the Brain and Spinal Fluids. Ahh, God Mushi Emperor is the Mushi themselves.”

Guriko remembered Sakaki’s question before, so she explained it altogether. Sakaki felt very unsatisfied and yelled aloud.

“It’s hard to understand it if you don’t explain it step by step and according to logic… Ah, never mind. This digestive organ and execratory organ stuff – if you put them together, that would made a human body, right? And these parts of the human body would be the Greater Fragments scattered across the world?”

Guriko’s tone still sounded like she was treating him like an idiot, and Sakaki was not happy. However, Guriko nodded and replied, completely oblivious to his expression.

“Yes. The world has different meanings according to the change in God’s status, and the existence of the seven Greater Fragments also represent God’s body. Everything that had happened so far in this world have more meaning than you might think.”

Whether it was the meeting between Guriko and Rinne, Guriko’s battle with Sterilization Disinfection, Guriko's deal with Melodia Noise Tear Song, the events in the Eternity Institute, or the discussion Guriko had with Single Room and then with Pois Catastrophe – no matter what happens, everything had their unique meaning.

“This time, Mushi became monsters and started to slaughter humans, and this event was meant to embody Death. Wouldn’t this mean God was fighting

against the monsters? The multitude of Mushi make up God Mushi Emperor – the part of God that used to represent Body Fluids. Meanwhile, monsters represent the poison that destroys the body, and it had completely taken over the entirety of the body fluids. As the body fluids circulate in the form of blood, the world was also gradually falling into destruction."

That means the monsters – the poisonous body fluids that covered the entire world – they were corroding Ultimate Shield The Weakest, who was God's Flesh and Bones, and made her mad and caused her to be an enemy of the world, much like the monsters. That was easy to understand. Monsters and the maddened Ultimate Shield

The Weakest were destroying and eliminating the Digestive Organ, the Execratory Organ, the Sensory Organ, and the Communication Organ one after another. Even Single Room, who was the Brain and Spinal Fluids, could not hold out for much longer – no, perhaps he was already dead. The world – God – was starting to become brain dead.

There was truly no more time.

"Are we going to stop that destruction now?"

Sakaki touched upon the core of the issue. Yes, Guriko and Sakaki arrived to prevent this destruction from happening. Guriko stood in front of a classroom and reached out to slide open that familiar door.

"We are all a part of God's body, a member of the society that makes up this world, and we can't prevent the world from ending no matter how hard we try. Even if we try to prevent the calamity, we can only protect whatever we represent and lies within our duty. However, those monsters, who are in the same world as us, could not just be limited to a single section of the world as they are enemies of the entire God. They are our enemies, and at the same time, they are not our enemies."

"Then – what should we do?"

Crack. Her hand was pushing the door, but it was not moving a centimetre. No matter how much pressure she put on the door, it would not move. This surprising event was not necessarily a shock for Guriko.

Guriko lifted her hand away from the classroom door and nodded towards Sakaki to get him to open the door. She said in a low voice.

“That Greater Fragment named The Weakest seemed to have put everything around here in stasis in order to make himself God.”

Guriko did not know The Weakest’s real name. Although he had called himself Zekiguchi Nashinori, it was a name that Zekiguchi announced when he was in the disguise of someone else. In conclusion, as God’s Flesh and Bones, The Weakest could make his body change in all sorts of ways, including his digestive and sensory organs such as the stomach and the eyeballs. Then, perhaps he can even turn into the form of God Himself.

Even now, Guriko still could not fully predict his – her? – plots and goals. After all, that guy…

“He definitely thought he could have done a better job. No. Only **him** would be able to do a better job, right? He wants to replace the original God and become a new God, eliminate every one of the monsters, and then rule over the world as the next God.”

“Then… where exactly is God? Which part of Him is here with us?”

Sakaki immediately responded to Guriko’s explanation, and voiced his original question.

“For humans, the so-called God was the ruler of our own body, so it would be The Self – this would be ‘Me’, no? But which part of Him is here? The Brain? Single Room?”

“No, Sakaki. That’s wrong. Even the brain is only a body part – that’s probably right, since Single Room was the one who said that. A human can probably remain alive if he only has the brain left. But is the brain ‘Me’? 'The Self' should be something more unique. Could you feel that? Something more unique?”

Guriko gave her answer.

“To put it simply… it would be the soul.”

She hurried Sakaki, who put his hand on the door, to quickly open it. However, even he could not open the door. If he was rejected as well, then that means the person in this room was really throwing a fit and didn’t want to see or hear anything. *We were all treated as if we were idiots. God casually created the world, but now when everything was ending, He removed Himself from it.*

“Where is the God for this world? Ahh, ‘the world’ doesn’t mean the entire planet, or every single country, or the other planets, or the entire universe. ‘The world’ is what we can feel, and is limited by our understanding. And here – this is the world of God.” Guriko continued.

Sakaki banged on the door powerfully and broke the glass pane on the door. It was very bright within the classroom. It was a pristine white color, which contrasted with the dark crimson that enveloped the world around the school building, as if the room was full of snow.

“God has always been in the middle of everything, in the middle of this philosophical story unravelling within this world. Who is the protagonist of this world? Who is the center of it all? Is it me? Is it you, Sakaki? Who does the world rotate around? Where – where is God?”

Guriko sighed as she said this, then suddenly lifted her hand up.

“God is right here.”

Then she punched the classroom door and completely destroyed it. Guriko held the gemstone Single Room entrusted to her in her fist. She then dragged Sakaki, who was still confused, into the familiar classroom.

“From the very start, God seemed to have always just lived in that limited small space.”

Guriko blinked a few times in order to get used to the blinding light before her. She did not turn aside when she spoke. That girl should be able to hear Guriko no matter where Guriko turned to. This classroom was so narrow and small as it is, and this was also that person's world.

"In this world - in this story with a deeper meaning - the places where God showed up were just His apartment, the uneven countryside path He took to school, the shopping district, and the school itself. That was about all. Even within the school, He didn't have much more than a vague impression apart from His class room. He could only imagine all the other places. Many details for those places were therefore fuzzy and fantastical."

Guriko lifted up her hand and pointed towards the glass coffin within the classroom. Someone was sleeping within it.

"That is the existence of the predicted God. He was simply a student who only move around in His room, and frequently stayed inside and didn't even leave the house."

Guriko started to scream. It sounded both like a roar and a prayer.

"How long are you going to stay being locked up inside?! You will die like this - Rinne!"

"... So loud. It's been so loud for a while now."

They could hear the very weak voice of a girl, sounding annoyed.

"I want to sleep."

"You will die if you fall asleep."

"Die?"

They could not see her and could only hear her voice.

"Yes... Ahh, what to do. It's such a bother..."

She slowly sat up. She was the protagonist of this proverbial story, the center of this world. She took no responsibilities, and caused everyone to revolve around her unknowingly - Usagawa Rinne, that ordinary girl, woke up within the glass coffin and rubbed her sleepy eyes.

The flower petals laid out underneath her started to flutter upwards with a rustling sound.

It did not feel holy at all. Rather, everything was nondescript and simple. But Guriko felt a definite chill. Guriko finally understood what Single Room meant by the purpose of the world. She understood that the moment she realized it was Rinne who was sleeping within the coffin. She finally comprehended the truth of

this world.

The person she wanted to see was here in the center of the world, but why?

Why must it be Rinne?!

"Ah, Guriko-chan. And Sensei is here as well."

Guriko had already recovered her senses and reverted her transformation. She was once again that girl dressed in shabby clothes with a wolf-like haircut. What she also wanted to get back was the joy she felt when she saw Rinne's simple smile.

Guriko never had any choice other than getting Rinne to make cruel decisions ever since the very start. If she saw Rinne smile like that now, then she would definitely embrace Rinne and cry with her, and act all spoiled around her.

The God of this world slowly looked around Her and tilted Her head.

"Um..."

The petals that stuck to Her hair started to fall. She sat on top of the coffin and spread Her arms.

"Ahahaha, my brave warriors, you are finally here. I am the source of all evil in this world. I am the Devil."

"... No, Rinne. I'm sorry, but I don't understand what you're saying."

Guriko finally said what she wanted to say. Rinne blushed a little and lowered Her head.

"Ah, no. It's been a long time since I've done this. It's so great to talk normally with Guriko-chan and Sensei again. I'm so happy. But that feeling was filling me up too much. It was irritating."

"Milady!"

That expression, that shy and embarrassed look – that was Rinne's signature impression. Sakaki looked like he was on the verge of crying and walked up to Her. Yes, this was a tearful reunion. He had always wanted to get Rinne back to how she was before. He labored ceaselessly towards that goal. He didn't even care if he died. He tried so hard that he almost went mad. Guriko wanted to go

up and tightly embrace Rinne too. However...

"Wait!"

Rinne's refusal stopped Sakaki's movement stiffly. It wasn't because he was shocked because what She said, but that he really couldn't move. He should not have forgotten that this was Her world.

"Ah... sorry. Um..."

She was sitting unmoving on top of the coffin. She didn't even have the strength to move a finger. And yet, She controlled the world.

"You might get absorbed... if you approach me. My situation is really bad right now. I'm absorbing everything just to stay alive. The light that filled this building and the world isn't as simple as it looks. It's because I don't even have the energy to imagine details in this world anymore. I feel I'm mixing everything up."

Her words were full of sounds like 'ahh' and 'umm', and She explained everything in a halting, confused way. Even though Rinne was God, it appeared She did not have a complete understanding of the construction of the world. She only understood everything in a rough and vague way, and relied upon Her own feelings and instincts for details. Her heart did not beat as a normal human’s would, but only as a reflex in order to stay alive.

"... We should be fine if it's just a matter of approaching you."

Guriko showed Rinne the red gem from Single Room that she held in her hand. Even though Rinne immediately noticed it, She still shook Her head dismissively.

"Mmm, you'll probably be okay with that. It's just a bit scary. See?"

Rinne's finger cut across the air with a whoosh. A trail immediately appeared, and fire erupted out from thin air. The flame scorched this empty, pristine space, and gradually dimmed.

“This is Single Room.”

Rinne said matter-of-factly, then smiled sadly.

“Kajiri-san died, so the power of Single Room returned to my body. Um, I am using this power subconsciously, so I may change the definition of the world without knowing it. That gemstone may be nullified as well. So don’t come close

to me… let me have another good look at it afterwards.”

The silent, windless classroom was then disturbed by air torrents. A spiral of wind was born within Rinne’s palm, and the surrounding air was all sucked into it. That incomprehensible sphere of air was decorated by countless petals of different descriptions. Rinne made a small movement to toss it away, and the sphere rolled freely throughout the classroom and stirred up gales.

“Melodia Noise Tear Song.”

Rinne said expressionlessly.

“Unpleasant Counter-Current.”

The sphere of wind circled the classroom, then returned to where it came from. It bounced lightly in Rinne’s palm, then easily twirled around and flew towards the opposite direction.

“Poison Catastrophe.”

The sphere of air made some strange twists on its path and returned to Rinne’s side. It started to rotate as if it ignored the laws of cause and effect, and flew straight towards Rinne’s head as if it was attracted by Her –

“Ultimate Shield The Weakest.”

Rinne’s hair instantly started to elongate and sealed the wind sphere within it, as if Her hair was a birdcage. The powers of Poison Catastrophe, Melodia Noise Tear Song, and Single Room were activated simultaneously. The sphere of wind became a little bird draped in flower petals, and made a shrill call.

“Then lastly – Sterilization Disinfection.”

*Pfft*, Rinne breathed out, and the white mist from Her mouth annihilated the bird cage. Her elongated hair, as well as the little bird born from Her, were both destroyed.

“Do you understand now?”

Rinne said with a very sad and lonely voice. She looked lost, and she hugged herself tightly. It was as if she was a saint suffering on the crucifix and shouldered immense pain. Her face twisted.

“Everybody was dead. Everybody was dead. I was born into this world without a purpose, suffered unnecessary pains, and got killed. Um, Guriko-chan, Sensei, maybe you are here to save me – no, you are here to save me, aren’t you?”

Rinne started to cry, and Her tears fell to the ground. It must be raining somewhere in the world. After all, She was God, even if She did not wish for it to be so.

“It would better if I am dead.”

“Rinne…”

Sakaki walked towards Rinne despite Her previous warnings. Rinne stopped his movement again with some powers of Hers, and started to shake Her head violently.

“I know. I know I shouldn’t talk like this. I don’t want to die either. I don’t want to die. I want to keep living peacefully with Guriko-chan and Sensei. But now I don’t want to live anymore. There are no more reasons for me to stay alive anymore. Why did everyone die because of me? It was all because I was born. That was why everyone got hurt, why everyone felt pain, why everyone died. Everyone is dead!”

Rinne put her head between her hands and screamed.

“ Melodia Noise Tear Song-san’s entire body was gnawed apart, her heart pierced through! Unpleasant Counter-Current-san’s corpse was discarded in the ruins, her heart gorged out! Even though Poison Catastrophe-san is alive again – but her life, her duty, and even her heart was shattered, and she was dead! Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san’s entire body had disappeared, and her head was smashed! Sterilization Disinfection-san was also impaled, suffered innumerable wounds, and died!”

Rinne began to sob pitifully. She was the Omnipotent God – She knew every single death that happened in this world.

“They would not be dead if they weren’t born! It was all because I was born! If only I didn’t create this world! I feel so sorry for having created humans! What a horrible sin! I created everything in this world! Everything is a part of my body! Everything! Human! Beasts! Reptiles! They would not be dead if I wasn’t born! They were all born because of me! From the very start…”

She said nothing else. She was repeating those sad, heartbroken words over and over again.

“It would be better if I were dead…”

It was an unbearable cry full of despair.

“I’m sorry… Um, I’m so sorry… I am God. I’m so sorry.”

“Rinne.”

Rinne couldn’t bear it any longer. She moved forward and brashly crossed the entire classroom. It was never a big room. She instantly stood in front of Rinne.

Rinne was rather mad and pushed away Guriko with all of Her might.

“Gu, Guriko-chan, no! Don’t come near me! You will be killed too! You will be absorbed – I don’t want to kill Guriko-chan!”

However, even someone as omnipotent and omniscient as Her could not stop Guriko. She could not stop Guriko at all. Guriko understood this, and wholeheartedly declared.

“Because I am the Monster, and I will never obey God.”

“---”

Rinne’s expression changed with that sentence. Guriko hugged Rinne’s shoulders. It was so familiar. It was Rinne’s familiar body and temperature, Her

slender build, Her smooth skin, and slightly pink hair, and that rather metallic, clear voice.

“Guriko.”

“Rinne.”

Guriko did not want to admit to this. She had always denied this and managed to keep living on. Sakaki, who could not move at all, seemed to want to say something, but Guriko ignored him.

“Single Room told me everything.”

“What…?”

Rinne opened Her innocent eyes, which Guriko liked so much, very wide. She looked straight at Guriko.

“Why did Single Room-san have to say it? Why didn’t he obey me… Everyone was a part of my body. Why didn’t my body move according to my desires?”

“Rinne.”

Guriko turned to look at Sakaki. She was embracing this girl and looking Her in the eye. This was the Final Judgement, even though it was a rather unimpressive Armageddon. Guriko, the only observer of the End, lifted up her head and said.

“No.”

She turned her gaze back to the girl before her, and said.

“You are not Usagawa Rinne.”

Rinne’s shoulders suddenly shook violently. A terrifying half smile surfaced on Her face. Tears filled Her eyes as She tilted Her head and asked.

“… How much do you already know, Guriko-chan?”

“This is all I know.”

Guriko took deep breaths and stared at Rinne steadfastly. Silence filled the spacious room until it became unbearable. Rinne looked coquettishly at Sakaki, while Sakaki looked accusingly at Guriko. *Why is he looking at me? This feels horrible.* Guriko started to yell loudly, as if she wanted to overwhelm both Rinne and Sakaki.

“This is all I know! It depends on you if you want me to know the rest of it, Rinne! No…”

Her scream was so loud it was piercing through everything in this world.

“… Just exactly who are you?”

“I – ”

Rinne’s body started to shake and Her outline began to crumble. What a fragile, unreliable God. Guriko hugged Rinne tightly. Sakaki was screaming. Everything was so lonely.

Snow White. The Poisoned Apple. The Prince.

Only these three remained on the final stage.

“I am –”

All emotions disappeared from Rinne’s eyes. She seemed to have become someone else in the blink of an eye. It was as if Her hidden true form finally became fully exposed.

A marvellous sense of majesty was emanating from Her as She pronounced that name.

“I am… I am the person who committed suicide by swallowing poison – I am Akutagawa Shirayuki.”

Sakaki was the first to move. It was a miracle for him to even move around. Rinne’s desire for him to stay away was a divine command, and it should have overrode all physical concepts and laws. For him to be able to move now should be because Rinne still wished for it somewhere in Her mind.

Sakaki moved his legs with difficulty and stubbornly tried to walk up to Guriko and Rinne, but he only fell heavily on the ground. Guriko had to help him up, and even Rinne lend a hand. This man, so entangled with God, was truly useless.

“What’s… going on?”

Sakaki moaned. Did he crawl all the way here just to ask Rinne this question? He had to seek an answer even if he could not move, but it seemed to have achieved something. Rinne seemed somewhat calmer when She was holding onto Sakaki's hand.

"Mmm."

Her expression seemed a little lonely.

"God is me, and the entire world was a reflection of God's status and emotions – I don't know if you can understand this, but that's how it is."

Rinne smiled. She was holding onto Sakaki with Her right hand, and holding onto Guriko with Her left hand.

"And the name of the God of this world - my name - is Akutagawa Shirayuki."

Then, as if She had given up on everything, as if She gave in to despair, She suddenly lowered her head.

"This is me. It's a pleasure to meet you for the first time."

As if She was singing, She spoke the truths of this world.

"Akutagawa Shirayuki is a sixteen-year-old high school girl. That was who I was. I was tired of some things in this world, so I ingested poison, and wandered in the realm between life and death. There was nothing I liked in reality. The poison was destroying my body, and it hurt so much. I had a very happy dream the moment I died."

*That dream was this world.* She opened her arms as She said this. Their surroundings, full of that pristine white light, suddenly became full of images, as if they were in a cinema. This was the record of this world.

Usagawa Rinne, who jumped into the ocean to commit suicide, and Sakaki Guryū, who jumped into the ocean to save Her.

They started a happy life together. Rinne was initially troubled because of the doubts in Her heart, but She finally gave in under Sakaki's aggressive antics. They fell in love with each other, and their lives were full of happiness from then onwards. They cooked together and went to school together. They texted each other via their cell phones. They dated as if they were innocent children. That

was because Akutagawa Shirayuki never fell in love before.

“We will end here.”

The Snow White within the coffin reminiscenced about the nostalgic past and smiled.

“It was truly a dream that completely dispelled the horror and pain of death. It was a happy dream. It would be good if we can live like this forever. However, I was already on the path towards death from the moment I ingested the poison. My world won’t last much longer. Therefore, in order to destroy my happiness, the monsters started to appear.”

Rinne looked towards Guriko, who was listening with wide-open, unblinking eyes.

“From the very start…”

Guriko watched as such cruel words were uttered by the person she liked so much.

“...You were designated to be my opponent, Guriko-chan.”

She was the Poisoned Apple prepared to murder Snow White. Yes, what did Guriko do at the very start? She was destroying Sakaki and Rinne’s happy life. She wanted to kill Rinne, and she gouged out Rinne’s eyeballs.

She was the monster created to end Rinne’s happiness.

“But I was not killed.”

Yes, that was strange. Guriko was truly a monster – she represented an amount of poison enough to kill God. The world should have ended the moment she came into contact with Rinne.

“… Why?”

“What do you think?”

Guriko didn’t know what to say when Rinne returned her question back to her. Back then, Guriko was a monster both in appearance and in attitude, so she should not have hesitated. But she did not kill Rinne.

“You appeared too early, Guriko-chan.”

Rinne laughed happily as She said this, but She instantly returned to Her previously serious demeanour, and spoke the name of that previous existence.

“Ultimate Shield The Weakest.”

That was the Greater Fragment who wanted to usurp the position of God. It was the Devil, the Betrayer.

Rinne – Shirayuki – whatever Her name was – sighed deeply.

“That person’s plots made the situation very difficult.”

There was a sense of dislike in Her words. Guriko felt confused instead. Shouldn’t Ultimate Shield The Weakest’s plots be mere inconveniences for God?

Rinne continued calmly and expressionlessly, as if She was reciting some legends.

“I’ll start by explaining the beginning of this world. This world was created by Akutagawa Shirayuki in the narrow cleft between life and death. This world only kicked into motion the moment Sakaki Guryū saved Rinne.”

It sounded like She was saying stuff that had nothing to do with Her. Sakaki’s expression looked rather strange. He couldn’t help but feel a bit sad for Rinne to call him Sakaki Guryū, even though it was easier to understand in that way. It was really like Sakaki to be considering such useless details even now.

Guriko tried very hard to think, and suddenly felt a sense of unrest in her heart.

If it was all according to Rinne’s words, and the world only started at that moment –

As if She read Rinne’s mind, God smiled and replied.

“In other worlds, this world did not exist prior to that moment. There was nothing.”

“Ah? But –”

What about Guriko? What about her memories? What about the name Yono? What about the life in her village? The days she spent with the two travellers? And those painful years, during which she lived as a monster?

“Those were all fake.”

Fake? All of her memories were fake?

She suddenly remembered something. She had returned to her birthplace in order to seek for a way to return Rinne to normal, but she found an empty, flat land. There was nothing. It was a flat plain until the end of the horizon.

Ultimate Shield The Weakest had appeared then and said to her.

– *Now that you're here, you have doubts,.*

– If you want to know the truth, then simply return to Kannonsakazaki.

Yes. Everything, all the stories, everything in the world, was within Kannonsakazaki and its surroundings. Everything was unravelling within this limited area. Everything outside of it was outside of God's domain. Indeed, Akutagawa Shirayuki never ventured outside of the town, and it wasn't rare for high school students to behave like that.

She declared the following as She looked towards Guriko's eyes, which were full of doubts.

"Guriko-chan is the monster with the duty to kill me. Even though that was the entirety of the character, Ultimate Shield The Weakest made up all sorts of memories and characteristics and inserted them into your body."

The name Yono, the travellers Kudan and Kirigirisu - they were all lies.

*Ahhh, is this what it means? Is this what it means to feel the entire world was fake? To feel what Rinne - God - always felt?* It was the first time Guriko felt the truth of this world.

*Ahh, so this was it. This is so cruel.*

God did not pay particular attention to Guriko's confusion, and continued to speak calmly.

"I know that Ultimate Shield The Weakest's goal was to replace me, and become the new God. Based on her abilities, that is indeed possible. In fact, it would be a rather good choice on some levels, but do try to imagine what would then happen. This world was already predestined for destruction. Even if she replaced me as God, the world would still crumble rapidly."

Yes. This world was only a dream dreamt by the dying girl, Akutagawa

Shirayuki, in a very brief moment before death. Even if Ultimate Shield The Weakest, who was originally a part of Akutagawa Shirayuki's body, replaced Her and became the dominating force in the body, she still would not be able to prevent the death of the flesh.

Guriko understood.

That was it. Ultimate Shield The Weakest made some very clever modifications to Guriko, and Single Room explained everything to her as well. They showed her a way to keep living after replacing the original God and becoming the new God.

"Yes."

As if She read Guriko's heart, Rinne spoke out the truth.

"If she became the true God, she only needs to kill the original form of the poison. In other words, she need to kill Guriko. According the rules of this world, if we eliminate the monster that will kill God, then the world may not be destroyed. To achieve that goal and in order to continue the existence of God, Usagawa Rinne and Gankyū Eguriko must not die before Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san finished all her preparations. Usagawa Rinne is Akutagawa Shirayuki. If She died, the entire world would be over. But if Guriko died, Akutagawa Shirayuki would be saved, and would perhaps wake up."

Wake up. Akutagawa Shirayuki would wake up. If the poison was destroyed and She woke up, then who knows what will happen to this world existing in the narrow cleft between life and death - She would certain wake up in Her reality, in a world dominated by the true God.

Ultimate Shield The Weakest would be frustrated if the situation progressed in that direction before she became the new God. That was precisely why she helped Guriko, who was imprisoned within the Eternity Institute, by manipulating Long-Armed Demon.

God nodded and looked towards the distance as if She was thinking of something. Ultimate Shield The Weakest was already dead. She was already absorbed into Her body. Be it her memories or anything else, She could recalled all of that person's life over and over as if it belonged to Her. After all, Ultimate Shield The Weakest was also a part of God.

"Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san's preparations were progressing steadily and smoothly. She was investigating the Fragments using the Eternity Institute, and she was also ascertaining the truth behind this world. She was interested in the talisman that would allow one to approach God - the gem of Single Room - and isolated Single Room in order to obtain it. She was always manipulating him. She was also doing her best to collect all sorts of large and small Fragments in order to prevent the end of the world and to stop the original God from dying."

When seen in that light, there was indeed some coordination in Ultimate Shield The Weakest's actions. All were done in order to replace God, without regard for anything else. Making monsters like Long-Armed Demon was only to remove those who might oppose her, too.

As if She was tired from all the talking, God stretched her legs and yawned.

"Huh... However, even someone as clever as Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san seemed to have moments when her calculations ran afoul."

"Ran afoul?"

God replied when She saw how surprised Guriko was.

"Why are you looking so surprised? It's just the calculations regarding Guriko-chan."

"Me?"

She didn't understand. Guriko seemed to have been manipulated by Ultimate Shield The Weakest all the way till the end. She miscalculated when it came to Guriko?"

"If miracles existed at all, then there was indeed one true miracle in this boring world full of lies."

She jumped up and happy smiles covered Her face. She now called Herself Akutagawa Shirayuki and a divine elegance indeed surrounded Her, as if She was a very elevated and distant being. But what was certain was that She had always been like this, and never changed.

She was Rinne. Even if She was God - She was also Rinne.

She was gentle, cute, and surprisingly stubborn. She was an ordinary girl who

would rarely feel depressed, but would still become frustrated with something small.

God - Rinne - softly held Guriko'shand.

"That miracle would definitely be our meeting, Guriko-chan. We are already friends now. We are friends who care about each other very much. Do you understand now? That is a miracle, because God and the monster became good friends. That's got to be a miracle that would never happen in any legend, right?"

"Rinne..."

She felt very warm for some reason. This really felt like a miracle. Although it had been a long time after their initial meeting, it seemed nothing changed. Rinne was Rinne, and She was someone very close to Guriko.

Rinne smiled as if She was embarrassed when facing Guriko, who was very moved, and tilted Her head.

"Yes, Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san became very frustrated because we became so friendly with each other. She got Long-Armed Demon to come kill me in order to achieve her ambitions faster. Didn't Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san pretend to be me back then? She wanted to replace me little by little. She will kill me, as well as take away my duty."

"Can that even be replaced? Shouldn't the world end the moment God dies?"

"Hmm... this is a very unreliable world. No, it wasn't like what I said. Perhaps it was only an experiment for Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san. She will kill me as well as Guriko."

She did not manage to kill them at the end.

"Mmm, we weren't killed. At the last minute, Sterilization Disinfection-san appeared. She was Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san's mortal enemy. Not only did she turn me into a Meat Doll, she killed Guriko too. That was honestly the biggest error in the entire plan. Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san hated Sterilization Disinfection-san even till the end."

Ultimate Shield The Weakest was dead too.

Her plots were foiled and the world was about to end. This was the moment

for the curtains to fall. It was almost time for the performers to admit the truth and expose the conspiracy. This was an indispensable part of the entire story.

However, Guriko did not let a single word go and listened to everything intently. The world was not over yet. They have not saved God yet. There should be one more scene, the last appearance of the actors in the epilogue where every conspiracy is revealed.

That would be the true end.

There was no plot, so no one can predicted the end – not even God.

“I’m sorry.”

She did not look like God at all, and lowered Her head very weakly.

“At that time, I became a Meat Doll who didn’t think of anything. It was all because I was whimsical. Um… Sensei… Guryū-san.”

She cast Her gaze towards Sakaki, who was standing there alone. Sakaki was a bit confused. He kept thinking about the facts related to the truths of this world – no, no, his faced looked really stupid. His face looked like he was considering how to save Rinne without letting the world fall apart. In fact, he was not thinking of anything apart from Rinne. Therefore, he instantly responded to Her words and nodded.

“Yes, Milady?”

“At least call me by my name in this kind of situation.”

“Rinne.”

“Mmm. Don’t use those extra names like Usagawa.”

Guriko couldn’t understand this conversation at all. Rinne was continuing in a calm, matter-of-fact way.

“I like you, and I love you.”

“I love you too, Rinne!”

Rinne looked rather lonely when She looked at that silly man, who responded without hesitation. She smiled with a lonely expression.

“Mmm, but I’m sorry. That was fake.”

Faced with Sakaki, who was absolutely stunned, She spoke with a very firm, pained, and dreamy expression.

“You are only a concept made to console Akutagawa Shirayuki’s lonely heart. You are the Prince who will give her happiness. You are the Teddy Bear who can embrace her tightly. You are the perfect lover who was created solely for that purpose – you possess a blind love towards Usagawa Rinne, who was Shirayuki’s imaginary personality. You are only an existence given such a destiny. That was the plan… But why? That was what should have been. Why did it end up like this?”

As if She was confused, She quietly grasped Sakaki’s hand and showed the saddest smile in the world. As if they were Romeo and Juliet, who were predestined to be attracted to each other in the story, they were also unfortunate lovers who were doomed to be forced apart.

Guriko did not have the feeling of romantic love and was not sure if the emotions between these two were correct, but she knew it was rather awkward.

It was so sad. They could not be happy no matter how anxious they became. What a pair of unfortunate lovers.

As if God was analysing it closely, She spoke out the simple emotions in Her mind.

“I... like... like Guryū-san. I can’t endure this emotion no matter what – I’m so anxious that I would go mad. How did I fall in love with someone who can never be united with me? I fell hopelessly in love with a lover I created myself, a lover who does not actually exist…”

As if She was in a confession – perhaps God would forgive a man’s sin if She received his prayers - as if She was praying, Rinne spoke.

“I looked away from the realities of this world by becoming a Meat Doll who didn’t think of anything. I wanted to have Guryū-san all to myself. I even felt annoyed towards Guriko-chan and wanted to put distance between me and her… really, I wanted to do absolutely nothing before this helpless world collapses. I just wanted to indulge and drown in this happiness.”

She spoke of everything and sat quietly on the lid of the glass coffin, and tears

swelled out of Her eyes.

“Ahh, this is horrible. Why am I so weak?! Even if I become God, I’m still useless. Just when I was living so happily… so many monsters popped out and the world was almost over…”

These monsters live by swallowing humans, and are immortal through reincarnation after their souls were destroyed. That was the materialisation of the poison corroding the body of God – or rather, of Akutagawa Shirayuki. Sterilization Disinfection, as the Digestive Organ, kept slaughtering the monsters. Unpleasant Counter-Current, the Execratory Organ, helped her to completely erase these monsters from the world.

However, Mina and Mitsuki were both gone. After their deaths, their power boosted that of God, the power of 'The Self'. God needed more power to keep living. Massive number of humans were sacrificed spontaneously throughout the world. Now – they were being absorbed by God, right? Even God Herself can sense this.

It was so painful. It would be better if She just died, so it made sense that She was screaming like that before. Even if it was Guriko, she would probably go mad if she knew she was only surviving because uncountable amount of people were being sacrificed for her sake.

Rinne’s shoulders shook slightly and said the final words in a low voice.

“I did not resist until Ultimate Shield The Weakest-san forced me to swallow Poison Catastrophe-san’s Fragment. I pretended I saw nothing. That Meat Doll ended then. I lost everything unconsciously.”

What forcibly woke Rinne up was probably the reproduction of monsters. It was probably the reason the world began to die. Poison Catastrophe’s Fragment, which was named Love Song, continued Rinne’s life because of the high amount of power it contained. She was able to change Her flesh back to how She was before, and reverted to the true form of God.

And now She was in great pain.

She bore the regret of having created this world and shouldered the pain of all who died, and clung on to life.

“If that was the case…”

Sakaki, who was previously silent and thinking of something, said very seriously.

“If that was the case – how can I help you, Rinne?”

“…”

Everything was silent. Rinne looked very lost, and Guriko didn’t say anything. Sakaki was incredulous. As if he wasn’t thinking at all, he yelled idiotically and courageously.

“Those reasons – duty, imaginary lovers, the Fragments of God – they don’t matter!”

“… They don’t matter?”

Rinne unconsciously spoke after Sakaki. Sakaki nodded powerfully at Her.

Then he hugged Rinne gently and pressed their lips together without hesitation. It was very embarrassing.

He was so stupid, careless, and weird.

Everyone was wounded and scarred by monsters, broken and struggling in pain, and lastly became the red light and was absorbed by God. The world was breaking up from the edges and there was no future left. However this guy was still smiling and stubbornly loving God.

A fool who thought of nothing.

However, Guriko liked him a bit. Guriko was very apprehensive about the truths of the world and was very confused, but he was different from Guriko. He was still so genuine with his emotions towards Rinne.

That was impressive. Despite being silly, he was still impressive. Guriko respected him from the bottom of her heart.

There was no use for him until the end. There were no special abilities for him. He had almost no relation with the story created by God. Perhaps he can save the world. The Prince who appeared suddenly at the end of the Snow White's story, who loved the Princess more than anything else, and saved her from desperation – that was Sakaki.

Sakaki Guryū made a loud declaration as per usual while facing God, who was blushing up to Her ears.

"I love you, Rinne. I don't care how Akutagawa Shirayuki's world is like. This is the reality in my world. No one forced me to love you. I love you out of my own volition."

Her expression looked very odd, as if She was about to cry. She started to sob like a baby.

"But..."

"You're saying 'but', so that means this is confirmed?"

"You're so devious..."

She blocked Her ears and tears rushed down Her face like She could not hold it back anymore. She emitted sad, wailing cries.

"You're too devious, too devious. What is this? Why are you always spoiling me? Everything is almost finished! Everything is about to be destroyed! No matter how many times I hear about this fake world, this fake lover, and these fake promises of love, I will still remain alone!"

"I am saddened that you are still using the word 'fake'. I am very serious."

"But these are all fake! These **are** all fake!"

She sobbed and shook Her head as if She had lost control of Herself, and struggled with self-spite. The pristine space around Her reflected God's will and shattered like lightning. Everything around them broke as if they were all made of glass. The very space cracked, snapped, broke - Guriko felt that the mind of God could no longer hold on.

All concepts were breaking apart, and dimensions were becoming twisted. The world de-stablized as if it was nothing more than a disturbed thought.

"Rinne..."

Sakaki, who was used to be relied upon, felt like he couldn't handle it. He looked very confused and sank into thought. Guriko wanted to stop the world from collapsing even if it meant losing her life. However, there was nothing they could do in this situation, where every existence was being overturned.

"Rinne!"

He could only call out that name he thought of for so long.

But Rinne - God - started to cry and scream like an ordinary girl.

"It's pointless no matter how much you love me! Everything is just my fantasy! You are just drowning in a dream! No matter what sweet things you may hear in a dream, everything will still be empty when you wake up!"

She scattered the rose petals everywhere. She closed Her eyes and put Her hands over Her ears, and curled up Her body into the fetal position. The world around Her started to crack as if it was a jigsaw puzzle. Everything shattered, and darkness took over. Then even the darkness started to grow narrow - they shrank until there was truly nothing left, a complete, utter emptiness.

Guriko hugged Sakaki and Rinne and they all lay on top of the coffin, waiting for the end. The darkness was making popping sounds little by little, shrinking little by little, as everything disintegrated and sank into nothingness.

Rinne saw none of that. She simply curled up tight and held Her hands over Her ears, and mumbled as if She was speaking in Her sleep.

"If... If I wake up, you will all disappear. Everything Guriko-chan did for me, everything Guryū-san said to me - those would all disappear like a mirage. They are all dreams. They are all fake. All of them are - all of them are!"

Then, as if She was rejecting everything, She gave out a painful call through Her tears.

"Don't be sad... I'm sorry, I hate this so much. How did the situation end up like this? It would have been better if I didn't dream. Everything was going to end

sooner or later; it would have been better if I never created this world."

"If you never had this dream..."

Guriko spoke her thoughts without hesitation.

"...then you would never have met me."

"..."

She didn't reply. She should have heard it, but She only wriggled Her body a little. As the omniscient God, it was pointless for Her to cover Her ears. She could hear everything. She knew everything. She probably also knew that Guriko's words were not a lie.

The world was filled with silence. Everything was about to be over. There was nothing left to see or hear. Guriko hugged Rinne and Sakaki, and the coffin that Rinne once laid inside - that was the extent of the entire world. Not everything was destroyed. Some things still existed.

After Guriko made sure of that, she said softly to Rinne.

"I... like you."

She said this clearly to Rinne, who had reverted to Her normalcy. She wanted Rinne to understand her straightforward emotions, and she wanted to repay Rinne.

Usagawa Rinne was an incredible girl. She met Guriko and saved her soul. Rinne was God, but She was a weak and gentle God. Guriko wanted to protect and help Her. She wants to stay next to Rinne from the bottom of her heart.

It didn't matter if she was a monster or the Poisoned Apple. Perhaps Guriko was the personification of death destined to kill Rinne. But Guriko still treated Rinne as her friend, and felt that Rinne was very important to her.

"I want to have you always remember this."

Guriko put her hands on her chest and smiled. Rinne lifted Her head up slightly and looked at Guriko with tearful eyes. Guriko caressed Rinne's hair, then embraced Her gently. God was so fragile, as if She would break if someone touched Her, and She was shivering.

Guriko wanted to protect Her. Guriko's memories were full of mirages. She was once a monster, but she became human after meeting Rinne.

The Poisoned Apple fell in love with Snow White.

That was the only miracle in this world.

Guriko made up her mind. She whispered to Rinne.

"Rinne - no, God - please don't make this world and the times we three spent together disappear."

She then asked quietly.

"If I die, would you be saved?"

"Guriko-chan...?"

Rinne opened Her eyes and grabbed Guriko in a panic, Her eyes opened wide. However, Guriko ignored Her, and coldly recited the truth.

"I am the representation of the poison that corroded Akutagawa Shirayuki, right? The reason this world fell into chaos was because Mushi and the subordinates of Ultimate Shield The Weakest came into contact with the poison - in other words, your blood and body was poisoned. The true cause of it all is me, right? Then if I die, would you be revived?"

"What are you talking about, Guriko-chan?"

Rinne's face was torn between sadness and joy at the same time.

"What do you mean, die? I don't understand you. Is this the destiny of all my friends in this world? That's not necessary - don't die. Don't kill yourself. This is my order as God."

"I am a monster... so I won't obey God."

Guriko repeated the same words and said her final words with a smile.

"This isn't decided by the world. This isn't the destiny of your friends. I am going to die out of my own volition."

"... Why?"

She was God, and yet She did not understand. Guriko sighed and lifted up a spoon towards her own heart.

"Stop getting me to repeat this. It gets embarrassing."

She pouted and clenched her hands without hesitation.

"It's because I like you, Rinne."

The spoon stabbed downwards and blood spluttered all over the white room, together with a repulsive sound.

Of course, the gentle God would never rejoice in the suicide of Her friend. She rapidly stretched out Her hands and put Her hands between Guriko's chest and the spoon. Blood dripped down as the momentum of the silver spoon drove it deep into the back of Rinne's hand.

"..."

Tears came out of Rinne's eyes and She froze, either because of the severe pain or She was simply scared. At the end, Guriko exhausted her strength and let go of her hand. The spoon pierced through Rinne's hands and the bleeding did not stop, gradually dying Her school uniform crimson red.

"... Why did you stop me?"

Guriko said rather angrily.

"I'm someone in a dream. It doesn't matter no matter who died here, no?"

Rinne lowered Her body and fell down weakly, then remained silent. Guriko

roared at Her. Everyone in this world were on good terms with God, and no one would yell at Her. Only Guriko, who was the monster, would be able to do that.

"You don't want to die, and you don't want to live. You want to die yourself, but you don't want others to die with you - everything you say is self-contradictory. Do you know why there are so many contradictions in here?"

Rinne lifted Her head with tears in Her eyes, and softly shook Her head as if She was a troubled little kid. Guriko said to Her sternly.

"How long are you going to stay naive like this? This world, which had allowed you to play and throw fits in, seems to have ran out of time. Even if you don't want to be hurt and don't want to feel pain any more, time was still almost running out. If you stay like this and do nothing, then you are going to die!"

Guriko gripped Rinne's shoulders tightly and forced Her to lift up Her head and look directly at Guriko. Rinne did not look away. What a strong girl She was. Guriko knew this. Guriko knew how many times she was saved because of Rinne's strength.

But now, Guriko will save Rinne.

"Why do you not fight? You should fight to your last breath for everyone's happiness. Mina, Mitsuki, Kajiri - everyone kept trying. Why - why are you not fighting? So many powerful Fragments have returned to you and formed your current body. You are so strong right now; you are inconceivably strong! You have accumulated Sterilization Disinfection, Unpleasant Counter-Current, Single Room, Melodia Noise Tear Song, Poison Catastrophe, **and** Ultimate Shield The Weakest. These are all within your body, right? You are already the most powerful being in the world!"

"Even if I am the most powerful being in the world, I'm still..."

She finally opened Her mouth to speak, but She still sounded so fragile.

"That still means nothing in that other world..."

The girl sobbed in a low voice intermittently as She spoke those weak words.

"I… really… I don't think I understand you, Guriko-chan. I can't... Akutagawa Shirayuki... really can't take this anymore. There was nothing I was good at. I had no friends or dates. I was being scolded day in and day out both at school and at

home... it was too painful to live."

The sounds Rinne emitted were like screams squeezed out of Her. Guriko interrupted Her mercilessly.

"That's why I'm saying it's so naive to think this was too painful to live through. Everyone in this world, me included, are fighting for our lives here. We are all trying to our best to keep living. No one would think that it's too hard. You think it's too hard to live? That's how it's meant to be. What's wrong with that?"

"..."

God - Rinne - Shirayuki - was too sad to make a sound. She only looked at the spoon that pierced Her hand in silence. She was thinking with intense focus. Everyone was already dead. There was no one left to help Her. She had to make a decision Herself.

Everything was already spoken. It was up to Rinne's willpower from now on. If She gave up on life, then only death would be waiting for Her. Guriko wished Rinne would be able to obtain a lot more hope - at least comparable to how much She had given to Guriko.

Rinne, Rinne - such a gentle and unique girl.

*Should we go to school together?*

Should we attend classes together in the same room?

Rinne had patted Guriko's head softly when Guriko wept at night and embraced Guriko silently.

*It's okay* - Rinne had said this to Guriko.

Guriko remembered those ordinary days, when they lived peacefully day after day. They went shopping together. They gazed at the falling snow together. There were no abnormalities, and every day was simply full of happiness.

Honestly, that would be enough.

"Rinne, keep on living."

Guriko smiled silently and put her hands across her chest, as if she was praying. She faced God, whose hands were covered with blood and was holding

onto a spoon.

Guriko turned her gaze to Sakaki. Her eyes communicated that he needed to protect Rinne's heart to the best of his ability.

Guriko yelled to the entire world. *It can't end just yet.*

Amid the center of nothingness, a scene loyal to what was proscribed within the Book to Revelations till the end, Gankyū Eguriko released her crimson wings woven from flesh and dripping with blood, and gave out a threatening roar. She embraced a girl and a young man in each of her arms, and screamed like a beast. As if she was the personification of the poison that stained all six hundred and sixty-six beasts - all of the Mushi - and made her the Queen of Demons, Guriko made a long, wailing sound full of vitality -

Then she unhesitatingly sank her sharp claws into her own chest.

She instantly dug her heart out. It was a beating, living, dark red and apple-shaped heart.

“- Come on."

That symbol of life was dripping with blood, and its movement tugged onto the blood vessels still attached to the body. Guriko placed her heart before Rinne's eyes. Rinne subdued the scream threatening to tear out of Her throat, and gazed at Guriko's heart.

Guriko seemed to want to say something, or do something to Rinne - or perhaps she had already done so. Guriko's entire body was stained scarlet with blood. Rinne's hand was held by the man She loved. God silently placed Her wounded hand, pierced by a spoon, onto Guriko's heart.

"Life... is not necessarily a good thing."

It was that metallic, transcendent, beautiful voice. It was the voice Sakaki loved. Together with the voice of Usagawa Rinne - the creator of this world - sanguineous tears mixed with blood dripped down Her face.

"Perhaps I will forget everyone. Guriko-chan, Sensei, the entire world... perhaps I will forget it all."

"That's fine too."

It would be a bit lonely, but Guriko was fine with it as long as Rinne gets to live.

*Come on, Rinne. Kill me. Kill Guriko. Then you will be able to live. You can then overcome the poison within your body, and return to your original world.*

"... I don't want to."

Rinne said in a soft voice. Guriko remained unmoving. *Is She still going to be so naive at this juncture?* Guriko was astonished, but also felt something was wrong.

Rinne smiled and Her hands caressed Guriko's empty chest. Everything around them was pitch black. It was the end of the world, where everything was darker than night, and nothing existed.

Firstly, there must be light.

A sliver of light appeared, like the first rays of the sun during dawn break. It illuminated the world and utterly drove away all of the nothingness. It became brighter and brighter, and now they could see God's expression as well.

It was the gentle face of a girl very familiar to Guriko.

"I won't let you die, Guriko-chan. I would... hate to see you die."

"But Rinne -”

*I am the poison. I am the personification of the poison killing Akutagawa Shirayuki. If I don't die, then God and the entire world will all die. That was what Guriko thought.* However, Rinne puffed up Her chest with pride and laughed.

"Who do you think I am?"

She made light illuminate the entire world. The glorious light was born between heaven and earth and filled all the space between the mountains and the sea.

White clouds surfed along the sky, the plants grew lushly with an eagerness towards life, and birds flew in the air, chirping incessantly. The birds then flapped their wings, and disappeared in the distance.

A breeze blew past, and a refreshing scent filled the place. The world was returned to its previous stage. No, it was completely re-created here. Hoards of animals rushed past. Green leaves on the trees absorbed the warm sunlight. Fish kept leaping out of the crystal clear lake, creating ripples in the water.

Guriko held on to her own heart, and looked dazedly around at the world. Suddenly, a cat chasing after a mouse ran past them. When she came to again, the surroundings of the crystal coffin was already enveloped by nature.

The branches of the trees were swaying, insects were chirping, and she could vaguely hear... the sound of a ship's horns?

As if she was the Snow White who just woke up thanks to the kiss of the Prince, Guriko reached out her blood-covered hand and touched Rinne, even though she still felt lonely.

"Single Room."

Suddenly, as if Guriko's heart just regenerated, the hole in her chest simply disappeared. The spluttered blood was also all re-absorbed as well, and completely disappeared. Guriko was a bit confused, and looked at Rinne in complete incomprehension. She knew she looked like an idiot, but she asked Rinne in a confused way.

"What, what... what is this?"

"This is Genesis!"

As if She was saying something simple - no, it **was** simple. She was God. This was Her world. It was Her freedom to make whatever She wished.

Guriko, and the little bird settled on Her shoulder, both looked as puzzled as Sakaki. Sakaki lifted his head to look at the sky, then genuinely asked God, the woman he loved.

"Rinne... I mean, that person... won't die now, right? You are saved?"

"No, I will still die. The poison is not removed yet."

She said this flatly while looking at Guriko. Her entire body was comfortably bathed in the warm sunlight.

"So even this is something that will only exist temporarily. There is not enough of an energy store to maintain it, so it will crumble very soon."

"If that's the case -"

This was useless. This kind of things will only accelerate the demise of God. That was what Guriko thought, but she didn't know what to do. She felt awkward, and could only look towards God with a sense of blame.

Guriko was finally prepared to die, to face the the loneliness and sorrow, and she dug out her own heart only to have Rinne waste it - did this God actually know what She was doing?

God looked leisurely around and was catching butterflies. Those beautiful insects, which flew and fluttered their wings, landed on Her. A smile surfaced on Her face.

"Now – you are the Poisoned Apple."

She grabbed a butterfly in Her hand without hesitation, and crushed the slender body of the insect as well as the fluorescent powder covering it. Guriko was completely confused as to what Rinne was doing, but Sakaki nodded as if he understood.

"I see. You transferred the 'role' of the Poisoned Apple from Guriko to the butterfly."

"Yes, it's Single Room's ability, the power to re-write the rules in this world. Now Guriko won't have to die anymore."

Guriko started to giggle. She finally understood. Rinne looked towards Guriko with a loving gaze.

The world won't be destroyed anymore. Guriko won't have to die anymore. Miracles were this simple. It wasn't because She was omnipotent, but only because God would be capable of this as long as She wanted.

However, since the poison was completely removed, She would have to wake up now. Would that be okay? Would that really be okay? Guriko did pretend to

put Rinne under duress and tried to commit suicide, and she had nothing to say. Would it really be okay?

"Sensei. Guriko."

Rinne had a gentle look on Her face that was soft enough to melt the entire world - it was an unforgettable image, as if it was imprinted into their eyes. Rinne spoke softly while gazing seriously at the two people next to Her.

"You said you want me to keep on living."

She looked away, and tears poured down Her cheeks.

"Then... I need to shoulder my responsibility. If it won't be too painful to keep on living... if it's actually important to keep on living... then please come see me when you can, even if it might only be once in a long while. We can have a chat, play together, and I can be consoled."

She still sobbed with that very weak voice, which tickled their ears. Rinne looked shyly at Guriko and Sakaki's eyes. She no longer had a weeping expression full of despair and self-deprecation. She now smiled with a will to gather Her strength and keep on living.

"We will meet once again in this world."

Guriko and Sakaki both nodded lightly. They wanted to give more courage to God, who had chosen the right way to live. They wanted to encourage the person they loved. They wanted Her to have a good, uneventful farewell.

Guriko spoke genuinely as she forcibly suppressed the sorrow of her friend's passing.

"Rest assured. I will protect this world when you're gone, and you can come back when you feel sad... Rinne."

"Mmm, ahh - it seems the time is up."

Rinne's entire body gradually became transparent. Akutagawa Shirayuki's crisis was resolved after the poison was removed from her. Perhaps this world born in the narrow cleft between life and death no longer permitted Her to exist here.

Rinne kept waving Her hands as Her entire body emitted light, and She lowered Her head.

"Anyways, this world won't return to nothingness anymore when I disappear, even though that was my original plan. But it should be fine now, no? Mmm, it should be okay. It will be okay... right?"

Guriko clutched her fists and shouted towards Rinne, who looked uncertain.

"Alright alright, hurry up and head off now. I'm gonna gouge out your eyeballs if you keep procrastinating."

"I hate having my eyeballs gouged out..."

Rinne's feet had already disappeared, and yet She still smiled and joked with them. At last, Her eyes were turned to Sakaki.

"Sensei..."

"Rinne."

Sakaki couldn't say anything anymore. He felt happy that She was born here, and felt sad that they perhaps would never meet here again. His mind was full of complex and incomprehensible feelings, and he simply gazed at Rinne.

His face was full of a pitiful expression. Rinne kissed his face as if She was pulling a prank.

"Sensei, don't change your mind and hook up with Guriko-chan while I'm gone!"

"That's impossible!"

"I won't want a man like him!"

Rinne laughed heartily towards the other two, as if they were living in that kind of nostalgic chaos again. She waved Her hand over and over. Akutagawa Shirayuki - the God of this world, Guriko's benefactor and friend, the girl named Usagawa Rinne - disappeared.

Her final words were -

*Farewell.*

# EPILOGUE 19: Snow White

Thou must labor arduously so this land may bear fruit.

Labor until thou returnth to that place whence thou cometh from.

Thou cometh from dust, and to dust thou shalt return.

"Yes! I will come back soon!"

And that was the truth.

Come! Lord Jesus!

May Our Lord Jesus be with us all.

My homeroom teacher was very weird.

Her name was Akutagawa Shirayuki.

She didn't tell us her age, but she still looked pretty young. She should be in her twenties. She teaches Japanese, and was also the advisor of the Literature Club. Moreover, she secretly wrote and published novels even though she was a high school teacher and a civil servant, and therefore prohibited from taking on other jobs.

"… Ahh, I'm late again."

Sensei was wearing her reflective silver-green glasses. She put her feet on the teacher's table, looking like a truly cocky rebel. She wasn't a small person, and she didn't look very chubby or babyish, but it just felt like she was being very childish.

I went to school at the Kanaryō Prefecture High School. The after school club

activities here weren't all that active, so the whole place felt pretty much abandoned after a school day. The rays of the setting sun shone through the window, and I could see only the Track and Field Club was out practicing. No matter where we were, everyone must be feeling bored.

Yes, no one else mattered. My current problem was this person with her legs high on the table and showing a complete lack of manners. Did she even know the basics of etiquette as a teacher? So what if she was wearing jeans. This pose really makes me unwilling to even looking at her. This woman…

A pointless impulse suddenly arose in me. I dumped the four books in my school bag and the hundreds of pages of freshly-printed manuscripts onto a table – I didn't care which student's table it was – and put all of my weight on it carelessly.

Then I loudly informed her of my thoughts regarding those stories she wrote.

"Sensei, I got tricked."

"Oh? What do you mean?"

Her chair, which she was balancing precariously on just two legs, suddenly collapsed on the floor. Sensei got the chair up again in a rush and pouted, still looking like a kid.

I slammed all of her published books I was holding onto the table. Those books had bright green covers. There were no strange titles on it, nor did it contain her own name, but it was her pen name.

"What the heck is this mess? Is this the memoir of your high school life, Sensei? Your ordinary first crush and the tales of your friendship? Do you even understand the purpose of documentary writing?"

"Un-huh!"

"Don't un-huh. I'm not complimenting you!"

I stared coldly at her. Sensei lowered her head and took out a cigarette, then took out a lighter and ignited the cigarette smoothly, proceeding to smoke with a blissed expression on her face.

She breathed out a huge puff of smoke and I went into a coughing fit. What

was she thinking? She only started being my homeroom teacher this year, but we have worked together previously in the Literature club, so we were not complete strangers. Even so, I didn't know anything about her personality.

As if I was trying to get rid of a stench that was getting closer and closer, I grabbed the pages on the table to fan away the smoke amidst my own complaints.

"Please don't smoke inside a classroom. You're gonna get fired if someone catches you doing that."

"Pwah. I'm not gonna listen to the words of a student who don't even understand my novels. You better die from my second-hand smoke. The risk is three times higher than normal! Three times!"

Three times the risk of what? Rates of lung cancer?

I got more upset and started to furiously flip through her manuscript. She gave this to me to look over in order to have the opinion of someone who was completely unfamiliar with her work. This was all to edit and proofread her work before official publication.

The books she already finished looked like they were manga volumes. There were illustrations in it, which was rare for this kind of books.

Mmm, she gave those books to me as references. It was not easy to quickly read through all of them. After all, those were not published copies, but were bound manuscripts.

Apparently, the contents of these books were recorded by my teacher when she was sixteen years old, and was a faithful description of her memories. That was why my interests were piqued thoroughly by the premise and stayed up the whole night to finish them all. The contents… were just as outlandish as manga volumes.

"You didn't even feature yourself throughout the entire story…"

"Why are you not addressing your teacher with honorifics? You have no manners."

She pouted, and I wanted to rebuke her that things such as manners were not

important at the moment. Akutagawa Sensei then suddenly put on a rather nostalgic expression and reached out for the manuscripts on the table. There was an old, faded scar in the middle of her palm - and I jumped.

At the very end of her manuscript – at the very end of that dreamy world – the girl named Usagawa Rinne was wounded. Gankyū Eguriko, Rinne's friend, tried to kill herself by using a spoon to stab into her heart. Rinne put her hand in front of the spoon to stop her friend – that was how it went, right?

"Ahh. This?"

Sensei touched her scar gingerly, lovingly. She moved as if the wound still had not closed. It did not feel fake. She was serious.

"This was incredible. It was a world of dreams, but this wound was real –"

She stopped talking, and took out the necklace that she always wore around her neck. Something – an ancient spoon – was dangling from the end of the necklace.

A sudden chill grasped my heart.

Sensei saw I was scared. She took this opportunity to puff out her chest and wave the spoon about as she continued.

"'I'm gonna gouge out your eyeballs!', right? I somehow brought it from that world into our reality, just like this wound. It was left stabbed into my hand, so it came back with me. That is why I believe in everything I wrote."

She was a grown adult, but her eyes were clouded, as if she was a child drowning in daydreams. Sensei continued as she reminisced.

"That world was not a dream. It was real. I – as Usagawa Rinne – met Guriko, fell in love with Sensei, and lived like that. Aha."

"You're still calling him 'Sensei'? Seriously?"

"You wanna have a taste of romance, boy?"

"No, thank you."

Sensei got rid of her serious expression and started to laugh as I looked at her. She was like a little kid, giggling for no reason at all.

But… Of course, I don’t think Sensei’s writings were all lies. It was just hard for normal people to accept them. Some parts of the book was very cruel and violent, and some other parts were very warm and heartfelt. If this was a true story, then it was actually a rather disturbing tale.

The persona named Usagawa Rinne was sleeping within Sensei’s body. At the end, she chose to keep on living and returned to this original world – even so, it was still possible that everything she experienced was simply a dream, because her real life at the time was too dreary. Perhaps that was indeed the correct answer.

But I have imagined what it may mean.

Many people – all of us – considered ourselves to be the center of the world. Internally, we possessed the entire world, and that was our starting point to write our own legends, with ourselves as the protagonist. When death descended, our worlds would also face their ends.

These worlds existed at places we didn’t even know about.

Sensei sought out one of those worlds. Right now – deep within Sensei’s mind – Gankyū Eguriko, Sakaki Guryū, and all kinds of different and strange people were perhaps still alive.

They were inside that small, untouchable world of legends. The world that Sensei encountered upon death. The world that only existed in the gap between life and death.

“… If you dislike this world, then perhaps you can manage something like this too.”

As if she knew what I was thinking, Sensei looked at me from behind her glasses and continued in an egotistical way.

“Wouldn't it be fun? Wouldn't it be great? Wouldn't it be awesome?”

Sensei kept waving her hands around like she was performing a show. She looked so silly. I couldn’t hold in and gave out a laugh, then lowered my voice and replied seriously.

“No, I won’t do that just yet. I don’t feel despair towards the world… I'm just

like how you are now, Sensei."

"That's right. This world is surprisingly happy. Even though I never again met the people in the other world –"

She suddenly seemed anxious as she said this. My bizarre homeroom teacher put her hand on her chest and screamed.

"Guriko-chan! Sensei! Are you worried about me? But… I'm fine! I'm still alive! I'm living a good life! I'm as happy as I was while in I was in your world!"

Those actions seemed both funny and weird at the same time. But I was touched by her for some reason. She had friends and a lover, but they would never meet again, would never speak to each other again, and would never reach each other again. That must be the loneliest feeling in the entire world.

I prayed that those people would answer Sensei if they heard her screams. I prayed for those incredible people who were born miraculously and accidentally in the world Sensei created. Maybe she was only able to come back to this world because those people were also trying their best to survive, that they wanted to stay alive and did not give up.

I was not God. I might suffer a lot in this world, where I cannot predict how the future would be. But Sensei might be able to keep it up. The companions who supported her and gave her strength were living in the world deep within her mind.

What kind of people would populate a world revolving around **me**?

It was silly, but I started to smile when I imagined this. Maybe I was laughing at my own thoughts. Sensei's face blushed and she seemed to be complaining. No, I was just fantasising – but that actually felt pretty good.

"Seriously, Guriko-chan and everyone else actually exist! They are still living in the world within my mind! Stop laughing! Seriously, do you think I'm an idiot?"

*Yes yes, I'm sorry, Sensei. I'll stop laughing.*

If you dislike reality, then go travel to that world. I still don't understand anything about you, Sensei.

I don't know if Sensei's story was true or not.

However – the scar on her palm, that bloodstained and rusty spoon, and the mythologies recorded within her five books – her memories of God felt real.

That world had definitely existed within Sensei. It contained her blood and tears, her flesh and her kin, her love and everything else besides.

I actually wanted to see that world, but that would probably be impossible. But that was okay. I don't need to rush. I will perhaps see the same thing on my dying day.

I already feel very satisfied in this world. I have this weird teacher, my friends, my family, and those dreary but precious days. Those hazy but happy days.

My homeroom teacher was very strange.

Her name was Akutagawa Shirayuki.

She was an energetic and rather foolish ordinary person who called herself – God.

# Author's Notes

Legends throughout the world spoke of Gods killing Giants, who ruled the primordial world before Gods. This action can be interpreted as defying the existing gods, denying that 'I' am a Giant, defying adults and declaring that the world governed by them is not important for us, instead creating a brand new world possessed solely by ourselves. In other words, those stories embodied us taking control over our own lives.

The Mushi to Medama serious started with killing the massive Dream World Beast. It was a coincidence, not a deliberate imitation of legends. You can probably find that the "The Unified Structure of God and Me", the article I fabricated in this work, to coincidentally fit into many things. It was a bit twisted, but still similar enough.

But would that be just misrepresenting reality? But in other words, even if everything I wrote was wrong, it wouldn't be pretty awesome as long as some other people accepted my thoughts.

That was the end of my introduction.

Good evening, my name is Akira. The final chapter of the Mushi to Medama series, Mushi, Eyeballs, and Snow White, finally made its way to your hands. I have started many series, but it was the first time for me to conclude a story. I admit I am a bit nervous. I was pretty worried whether this book would fall flat on its face.

It was all thanks to my great readers and the editors and artists who supported me since the beginning that I was able to be here today. Thank you all so very much.

I would like to thank Satō-san in particular, who never got upset with my whims and always treated me gently, and approached the job with dedication and responsibility. I would also like to thank Satō-san's predecessor, Kindaichi-

san, who always consoled me when I got too tired and even supplied me with books and CDs to relax. I would also like to thank Mitsuki Mouse-san, who created unique and lovely images to portray the bizarre world of Mushi to Medama in a more mild way. The three of them deserve special thanks.

I would also like to thank all my readers. Mushi to Medama was adopted into a manga as well as into Drama CDs, and I have received so many lovely fanarts and letters from my readers since then. Of course, there were also readers who purchased the Mushi to Medama novels out of the myriad of books out there in bookshops. It was all thanks to you. Thank you so much.

The article labelled "The Unified Construction of God and I" at the beginning of Mushi, Eyeballs, and Lovesong never explained the purpose of God. I am going to provide an answer here.

The purpose of God was to perpetuate this happy and peaceful world.

And 'my' purpose was also to live a long, happy, and peaceful life.

This novel really just wants to bring more peace and happiness into people's lives, even if only for a little bit. Please live longer, all the Gods in this world.

Thank you for reading all the way till the end. I would like to sincerely thank you.

I can suddenly see Guriko-chan in my mind. I am so happy.